United Nations A/55/PV.46

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-fifth session

46th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 31 October 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 37 (*continued*)

Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the special session of the General Assembly in this regard

Report of the Secretary-General (A/55/344)

Mr. Al-Absi (United Arab Emirates) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I should like to express our support for the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, which was held in Geneva, five years after the World Summit for Social Development.

Despite the interest that has been shown and the international initiatives taken over the past decade to combat poverty and illiteracy, it appears that we must take further measures to ensure social development. Reports and statistics show that more than 1.25 billion individuals live in abject poverty and are deprived of essential services such as food and potable water. Many suffer from contagious diseases, are illiterate and subject to violence, national conflicts and natural disasters. We must therefore acknowledge that efforts taken to date have not been sufficient to deal with these challenges or to enable us to take a qualitative step forward towards improving social conditions for citizens of developing countries, especially those suffering the most.

The World Summit for Social Development raised the awareness of heads of State or Government of the social and developmental problems confronting peoples and of appropriate solutions. We therefore call for the political will to implement more substantial and objective regional and international strategies to combat poverty and relieve the debt burden, particularly for the least developed countries, so as to make it possible for them to take advantage of available technology and globalization, attract foreign investment and allow access to the world market for their exports.

We call upon the international community to find innovative ways to finance development in the developing countries. This will require a pooling of efforts at the national, regional and international levels to create a just and equitable international environment conducive to the establishment of international peace and security.

For the benefit of our citizens, and in accordance with the recommendations of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, the head of State of the United Arab Emirates, we are modernizing our existing institutions and developing new ones, including cultural, health-care and other social service institutions, and making efforts to provide gender equality in areas of work and education. Furthermore, efforts are being made to rehabilitate the disabled and elderly so that they can participate in sustainable development projects.

Our State's interest extends beyond our own concerns, of course, to other areas. We are interested in cooperating with bilateral, regional and multinational development organizations. The United Arab Emirates

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has helped to build schools, orphanages and hospitals. We have also provided concessional loans to developing countries and organized and hosted conferences and seminars in various areas.

In conclusion, we hope that the international community will implement the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit and the special session held in Geneva in order to bring about a better future for humanity.

Mr. Aboulgheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to begin by expressing our thanks and appreciation to Mr. Nitin Desai and Mr. John Langmore for their notable efforts in the various fields of social development, including those of poverty eradication, productive labour and social solidarity. Last June, with the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, we witnessed the largest international gathering of governmental and non-governmental organizations in five years. They came together to reaffirm their determination and political commitment to eradicate poverty, make social progress and enhance prosperity and social development.

We, the countries that participated in the special session, pledged to make every effort to achieve social justice and improve conditions for humanity in the light of the expectations of the peoples of the world. We were requested to accord priority to the social aspects of development, since they are connected to, have an affect on and are influenced by the economic and political aspects in such a way that all three form one indivisible whole, which has both a positive and a negative impact on stability and international peace and security.

We must ask ourselves, and all the countries of the world, to make greater efforts in the field of social development. We welcome the fact that the special session reaffirmed the strong support of many countries for the obligations set out in Copenhagen, particularly those relating to the setting up of national plans, programmes and strategies to promote social development by eradicating poverty, providing increased work opportunities, developing human resources and establishing social investment funds, in addition to increasing their budgets for the social sector.

Egypt, welcomes the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly and reaffirms its commitment to carry out the recommendations of that session, as well as those of the Copenhagen summit, which remain important for the promotion of social development and the removal of obstacles that impede its implementation. There is no doubt that poverty is the greatest challenge and the main obstacle to the efforts of developing countries to fulfil their obligations to foster social development. This cannot be achieved without two important developments — support for the process of economic and social development at the national level and the creation of an international environment of greater justice and equity.

Mobilizing and apportioning resources is the basis upon which all countries carry out their obligations in the field of social development. The concept of enabling peoples and the promotion of human rights and basic freedoms is not limited to promulgating laws and decrees. Indeed, it exceeds that to include their application through an interest in education, health, training, professional training, employment opportunities and providing basic services. This requires financial resources and technical assistance, not only by national Governments but also by the international community, as a political commitment pledged by advanced countries.

There is no doubt that the increasing marginalization of the developing countries' role in the international economy threatens to create new confrontation lines between the South and the North, operating on unjust economic and developmental criteria that might negatively affect international stability.

The phenomenon of globalization, with its advantages and disadvantages, imposes policies that take into account its influence on the comprehensive development of States. Here I would like to make two points that we need to be guided by when dealing with social development topics. The first is the need to respect different cultures and civilizations. There is no reason whatsoever to impose on any of them a way of life they do not accept and practices they do not wish to follow. Secondly, despite the fact that the basic pivotal role in the development process falls on the shoulders of the different Governments, the success of their efforts is linked to a conducive international environment, with all that it comprises, such as trade,

investment, providing financial resources, technical assistance and the transfer of technology.

Egypt fully appreciates the importance of social development, and is committed, along with all the other countries of the world, to making the necessary efforts to face up to and overcome the problems confronting social development. This could be done by setting up an economic, political, social, cultural and ecological environment conducive to the eradication of poverty, the expansion of the labour market, combating unemployment and encouraging social complementarity and integration. Egypt has begun to draw up a new social contract and a complementary social development strategy, built on full partnership between the State and civil society. It is also based on the enhancement of small- and medium-sized projects.

In this context, I recall and affirm the proposal made by the First Lady of Egypt, Mrs. Mubarak, in her statement before the special session of the General Assembly to review and appraise implementation of the recommendations of the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development. Mrs. Mubarak referred to the need to set up a mechanism that would create a new development model for small projects. She has made intensive efforts in this field in order to achieve social progress in line with the commitments of the Social Summit and the special session.

Egypt has allocated nearly 30 per cent of the Government budget to the social sectors, in particular for health, education, and subsidies for basic needs, over and above what the Copenhagen 20/20 initiative asked for. Egypt's strategy on social development is based on the following points. The first is guaranteeing a continued increase in development rates within available resources, and constantly enhancing these rates, while correcting the rate of population increase and attempting to push it down. Secondly, we intend to make the optimum use of all manpower resources, without marginalizing any group or sect, and concentrate on human development and spreading social consciousness. The third point is deepening and supporting democratic practices and maintaining the continuity and stability of constitutional institutions; making a commitment to legitimacy and the rule of law, with special attention to the protection of human rights and basic public and private freedoms, through the guarantee of serious and effective participation of all citizens in managing national affairs; and taking and implementing the decisions that will achieve social integration and complementarity.

In conclusion, let me affirm once again the importance of the integration of national, regional and international efforts in order to enhance and support social development in all its spheres and all its aspects. I call upon all countries and States to commit themselves to implement the recommendations of the World Social Summit and international conferences, as well as the special session of the General Assembly, and to carry out their obligations in this context, particularly by mobilizing their resources and giving technical assistance to the developing countries. Social development is a comprehensive international responsibility that affects our daily lives and the future of our world.

Mr. Geete (India): The twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, which took place earlier this year, gave Governments an opportunity to chart a road map for the future after reviewing progress in the implementation of the 10 commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration. That review made it clear that most, if not all, of the commitments remained unfulfilled. Of the many reasons for this collective failure, the inadequacy of international cooperation was the most important.

This fact is extraordinary because, between the Copenhagen Summit and the special session, globalization has strengthened, gone into crisis and come under critical scrutiny. Globalization means — or should mean — interdependence. The contagion effect of the financial meltdown of the mid-1990s made it clear that no country or group of countries can insulate themselves from the travails of others. It also showed that, while the first symptoms of a crisis become apparent in the financial or economic sectors, the most devastating effects are on the social fabric and political stability. Equally, the experience of those countries that have done best in the globalized economy shows that investment in social capital pays off. Both to promote globalization, and to ward off its adverse effects, social development is an absolute and urgent necessity. This has been so clearly established that it is astonishing that it remains the most neglected sector in international cooperation.

The Programme of Action adopted at Copenhagen set a number of targets to meet the basic social services needs of all. While there have been modest gains in

education — especially in narrowing the gender gap in primary and secondary school enrolment rates — other targets remain to be achieved. The adult illiteracy rate was to have been reduced to half the 1990 level, but dropped only by 5 per cent, by 2000. By this year we should have halved severe and moderate malnutrition among children under five, but two out of five children remain stunted, one in three underweight and one in 10 wasted. Three million infants still die within a week after birth, and another 3 million are stillborn. Some 15 million women live with permanent injuries from childbirth-related complications. The toll in human misery is incalculable.

The estimates published by the World Bank in its *World Development Report* this year offer little comfort. In order to cut income poverty by half by 2015, there should have been a compound rate of decline of 2.7 per cent a year between 1990 and 1998; instead, the rate was 1.7 per cent. Universal primary education is unlikely by the target date. Reducing infant mortality by two thirds would have been possible with a 30 per cent decline between 1990 and 1998; the actual rate was 10 per cent. The World Bank argues with some emphasis that the actions of the developed countries and multilateral organizations will be crucial for success. They should listen to the voices of their development partners. What the Bank describes as the problem of voicelessness and powerlessness as the institutional basis of poverty is a challenge between, as much as within, nations.

Some of the policies that the developed world has followed are self-defeating. As the World Bank points out, agricultural subsidies in the developed world lead to $20 billion in welfare losses for the developing world, equivalent to 40 per cent of official development assistance, but the same subsidies lead to $63 billion dollars in welfare losses within the developed world. It is difficult to see whose economic or social interests are protected by these policies. On health, the World Health Organization has again reminded us that only 10 per cent of the $60 billion spent each year on medical research goes into the search for cures for the diseases that afflict 90 per cent of the world's population. More than 1,200 new medicines were patented between 1975 and the turn of the century; only 13 were for tropical diseases.

The list could go on, but these examples illustrate the collapse of a political will to work together to implement the commitments that the international community freely undertook at Copenhagen. In the meeting yesterday of the Economic and Social Council with the executive heads of the Rome-based agencies, with the theme of eliminating hunger in the new millennium, we were reminded in the President's summary that if we are to meet the target reiterated at the Millennium Summit — to reduce by half by 2015 the number of people going hungry — the number of the undernourished should be reduced by 20 million a year, as against the 8 million a year we achieved in the 1990s.

This is a picture of almost unrelieved gloom. Its darkest aspect is the apathy with which the more fortunate still look at these challenges and desperate needs. The Secretary-General's report has two bright spots: the commitments made by two countries to raise their official development assistance (ODA) to 1 per cent of their gross domestic product, and the deepening of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. These are welcome measures, but nowhere close to what is needed.

The decline in international development cooperation is not just reflected in the continuous fall in ODA. Our partners in the developed world should be willing to address fundamental structural matters, such as protectionism choking developing-country exports; regulatory mechanisms to control short-term capital movements; transparency in the functioning of the international financial institutions, including transnational commercial banks; the progressive removal of the developed world's agricultural subsidies; increased access to technological innovations; and, particularly in the health sector, balancing intellectual property rights with the needs of patients in developing countries. It is against this background that we will judge the new initiatives that were agreed upon at the twenty-fourth special session to strengthen the implementation of the Copenhagen Programme of Action.

Mr. Kobayashi (Japan): At the dawn of the new century we have to strengthen our efforts to make the world a place where every member of the international community can enjoy a life free of fear and hunger. This is one of the messages delivered at the historic Millennium Summit. In this context, my delegation considers it significant that at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, convened in Geneva last June, further initiatives for social development were adopted, based on the review and appraisal of the

implementation of the outcome of the World Summit held at Copenhagen in 1995. The further initiatives will provide useful guidance, shedding light on concrete measures to be taken to further advance social development.

Now, as we begin to engage in concrete follow-up to the outcome of the special session on social development, I would like to share with the Assembly our views on several matters to which the international community should pay particular attention. I would also like to present some of the efforts being made by Japan in this respect.

First, my delegation considers it particularly timely and useful that the theme chosen for this year's special session was achieving social development for all in a globalizing world, as it helped to stimulate discussion on concrete measures to tackle the serious challenges posed by globalization. It is significant that the political declaration adopted at the special session emphasizes that no one is to be excluded from the benefits of globalization and global economic development, and that the Assembly attaches importance to international cooperation in order to achieve human-centred development.

In that connection, I wish to note that Prime Minister Mori of Japan stressed in his statement at the Millennium Summit the importance of a human-centred approach which has as its objective respect for the life and dignity of each individual, in order to realize a more peaceful and prosperous world in the twenty-first century. Further, as a concrete contribution to that end, Prime Minister Mori announced an additional financial contribution to the Human Security Fund, which was established to implement a human-centred approach in addressing major issues facing the international community today. We hope and believe that this initiative will contribute to the furtherance of the human-centred approach in promoting social development.

Secondly, my delegation would like to stress the importance of taking concrete steps in implementing the actions suggested in the further initiatives for social development, including measures that address newly emerging issues such as promoting corporate social responsibility; providing developing countries with information technology-related support; and achieving a reduction in the number of HIV-infected young people in the most affected African countries by 25 per cent by the year 2005.

In this connection, I should like to note that at the Group of Eight Okinawa Summit, held last July, the leaders agreed on the importance of addressing issues that are emerging in today's increasingly globalized world. Japan is ready to contribute to the efforts of the international community to tackle these issues through the initiatives it announced on the occasion of the Group of Eight Summit.

These initiatives include, first, a comprehensive cooperation package in the field of information technology, amounting to approximately $15 billion, to support developing countries in this field, and, secondly, measures in the area of infectious and parasitic disease, with an allocation target of $3 billion over the next five years. Along with these initiatives on newly emerging issues, Japan will contribute to support the efforts of developing countries to improve the situation relating to the basic human needs of its people.

Thirdly, in view of the wide range of areas to be covered in our efforts to advance social development, it is of crucial importance for major actors, namely the United Nations Member States, international organizations and civil society to engage in effective follow-up by strengthening coordination and sharing experiences.

As the outcome document of the special session states, it is of extreme importance for the different entities of the United Nations system to maintain coordination among themselves while giving in-depth consideration to the appropriate approaches each might take. At the same time, in view of the important role to be played by civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in advancing social development, my delegation is pleased that the next session of the Commission for Social Development will have as its subtheme the role of volunteerism in the promotion of social development.

In conclusion, in cooperation with major actors, Japan will continue to do its utmost to contribute to the promotion of social development, so that in the new century every individual member of society will be free from fear and want.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) *(spoke in Spanish)*: I have the honour of taking the floor on behalf of the

Latin American and Caribbean countries members of the Rio Group to speak on agenda item 37, entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the special session of the General Assembly in this regard".

The year 2000 has seen social issues take on renewed importance within the United Nations agenda. During the special sessions of the General Assembly to follow up the Beijing and Copenhagen world summits and at the Millennium Assembly as well, Member States designed a roadmap for the years ahead on the main issues of interest to our peoples, and in particular social issues.

The member countries of the Rio Group remain convinced that without poverty eradication, full employment and social integration, the world cannot have lasting peace, security or due respect for all human rights. Any and all efforts that contribute to fulfilling the commitments undertaken by heads of State or Government, as set forth in the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, can only redound to the benefit all of the citizens of our countries.

The twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, which was held in Geneva under the title "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world", had the merit of not being a forum for theoretical discussions alone. Rather, it was a forum where innovative actions and initiatives were proposed to speed up the implementation of the agreements reached at Copenhagen. We believe that all Members should be proud of this successful achievement on the part of the United Nations.

During the meeting of the heads of State or Government of the Rio Group, held in June at Cartagena, Colombia, the Cartagena de Indias Declaration Rio Group 2000: Commitment for the Millennium was adopted. That Declaration explicitly set forth the commitment of our region to the human dimension of development and established mechanisms for reducing economic inequality and the high incidence of poverty in our nations. In order to achieve this objective, we wish to state our intention to allocate adequate levels of resources for social programmes, especially those relating to human resources, with the additional purpose of achieving gender equity.

On that occasion, we also argued for an increase in international trade flows and rejected the protectionist measures of the industrialized countries, particularly in the agricultural sector, which bear no relation to the policy of open trade practised by the countries of our region. It is therefore necessary to ensure access to external markets and to insist on the elimination of the subsidies granted by the developed countries. We hope to see an expansion in international trade and hope also that our exports will contribute to the creation of employment and of conditions that are conducive to social development.

At the Cartagena Summit, the Rio Group also issued an appeal for a just and lasting solution to the growing problem of the external debt, with particular emphasis on the highly indebted countries of the region. The external debt cannot be allowed to remain an obstacle in the way of addressing the pressing social needs of our people.

One additional aspect we have stressed is the universal access to basic education and a substantial improvement in its quality. Both of these elements are the fundamental basis for productive human development and for the exercise of democracy. We consider it important to strengthen occupational training and apprenticeship programmes in the use of new scientific and technological instruments. This task, together with the creation of opportunities for productive employment, will be the basis for greater social and cultural participation by our young people.

The countries members of the Rio Group reaffirm today before this Assembly the decision of their Governments to pursue economic and social policies that would place people at the centre of their concerns and lead our countries along the path to sustainable development. We also reaffirm our commitment to integrating social development programmes into our economic policies and to promoting positive interaction between environmental, economic and social policies.

We have emphasized this in the past, but would like to stress it once more. The members of the Rio Group have a commitment to applying effective and transparent forms of government, subject to oversight by our citizens. We also pledge to continue the fight against corruption, a scourge that affects developed and developing countries alike.

In Latin America as a whole, we have made significant progress towards finding solutions to the current situation of poverty. However, there remain considerable sectors of the population that have been unable to benefit from that progress or from the opportunities offered by the globalization of markets. That is why we feel it necessary to step up our national efforts and to make better use of international cooperation in order to reduce by half, by the year 2015, the number of people living in extreme poverty, as agreed at the special session held in Geneva. In this regard, we hope to build solid bridges of cooperation and dialogue with the spokesmen and organizations of civil society in our country.

Before concluding, I wish on behalf of the countries members of the Rio Group to thank the people and Government of Switzerland for the generosity and hospitality extended to us during the special session held in Geneva in July of this year. We are particularly grateful for the very helpful attitude of the Swiss authorities in permitting representatives of civil society to be heard in the Geneva 2000 Forum, whose work successfully complemented the intergovernmental deliberations.

Now that the review of the implementation of the commitments contained in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action has been completed, it is up to the States Members of the United Nations to assume the obligations that we have accepted to hasten the social development of our peoples. As has been said so often, the time for words is over. It is now time for action. We, the members of the Rio Group, have been inspired by the Copenhagen process to take action in the years ahead.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development was an opportunity for the international community to reaffirm the 10 commitments it undertook five years ago in Copenhagen. It was also an opportunity; however, for the 178 countries and the 600 non-governmental organizations that participated critically to assess the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

At the outset, my delegation wishes to pay a heartfelt tribute to the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, Ambassador Cristián Maquieira of Chile, and to the other members of the Bureau for their excellent work during the 12 months of negotiation. My delegation also congratulates the Government of Switzerland on its offer to host that session and in particular for all the facilities it provided, which allowed us to organize our work to perfection.

The twenty-fourth special session was above all an occasion to discuss the challenges of globalization, the opportunities it offers and the unprecedented constraints it places, in particular, on the developing countries.

The final document, entitled "Further initiatives for social development", which was the outcome of grim negotiations, while reaffirming the central role of national Governments in achieving social development, stresses no less emphatically the responsibility of the international community for controlling this dual-speed globalization, debt-crisis management, market access for the exports of the countries of the South and a substantial qualitative increase in official development assistance.

Mr. Andino Salazar (El Salvador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Moreover, the political declaration adopted at the special session in Geneva rightly identified insecurity, financial crises, poverty, inequality, exclusion and marginalization of a growing number of people in all countries and even entire regions as considerable obstacles to the harmonious integration in the global economy for many developing countries, in particular least developed countries.

We believe that the eradication of poverty, productive employment and social integration are basic strategic objectives for our Governments. It is therefore essential to strengthen international cooperation to that end in order to attain the goal of reducing the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by one half by the year 2015.

My delegation also feels that priority interest should be given to mobilizing additional resources for education in order, inter alia, to attain the agreed objectives adopted at the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000. The Forum stressed the important progress made in many countries towards establishing universal education, but also emphasized the enormous needs yet to be met, in particular the facts that, today, 113 million children have no access to primary education; that, of 800 million children under

the age of six, only one third have some kind of preschool education; that 880 million adults are illiterate; and that gender-based discrimination is still rife in educational systems.

If achieving the goal of universal education requires will on the part of our Governments, how can such political will be implemented if the means to do so are so sorely lacking? As was suggested in the Dakar Framework for Action, the international community must immediately launch a world initiative aimed at elaborating strategies to mobilize the resources necessary to providing effective support for the national efforts of our Governments.

In this context, we must provide more external resources for education, particularly basic education; improve the predictability of external aid flows; to ensure more effective coordination of donor initiatives; and to strengthen, expand and even expedite measures to alleviate and cancel debt in order better to combat poverty.

Achieving the goal of education for all requires increased official development assistance and debt relief of some $8 billion a year. This reasonable objective can be attained within the framework of a voluntary world initiative, because the means exist and the resources are available. All we need is the will to release them.

Similar efforts should be made in the area of health, by improving access to health care, through reasonable prices, and by a coordinated, determined global campaign against AIDS in Africa and elsewhere.

Before concluding, I wish to emphasize Senegal's commitment to make its national policy consonant with the objectives agreed in Copenhagen and reaffirmed at the special follow-up session held in Geneva. Our head of State, His Excellency Abdoulaye Wade, and the Government formed in April as a result of the democratic change that brought him to power on 19 March 2000, give high priority to the fight against poverty and to involving women in that fight.

A big social mobilization programme is under way to tackle the major challenges of poverty, endemic disease, maternal, infant and juvenile mortality and the low level of education for girls. My Government, with the support of its bilateral and multilateral partners, is striving to redefine its national anti-poverty strategy by stressing capacity-building and the promotion of empowerment, in particular by targeting young people and women in vulnerable areas. The goal is to halve by 2010 the impact of poverty on households. To that end, several specific income-generating projects are under way, including a project to combat the poverty of women and the creation of a social investment fund. Work is proceeding on another project, to create a national solidarity fund to assist disaster victims and the needy.

I turn to the subject of health. My Government organized in July a national health conference, which was an opportunity for all actors in the health system to outline the major reforms needed in our national health system, focusing particularly on questions such as the geographic and financial accessibility of care and medicines, universal health care, the development of research and the enhancement of human resources.

I reaffirm my Government's determination to do everything possible to implement in its day-to-day policies the commitments we endorsed in Copenhagen in 1995 and in Geneva in 2000.

As the Prime Minister of Senegal stressed when he was the head of our delegation at the twenty-fourth special session:

> "the war on poverty must no longer be limited to speeches and good intentions. The war on poverty and underdevelopment requires concerted action by all. In that struggle we need not systems based on assistance, but genuine, responsible, mutually advantageous partnership based on consistent, open and practical reactions and mechanisms that will make a difference and will be effective and stable." (*A/S-24/PV.7*)

Mr. Patricio (Mozambique): My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's comprehensive report (A/AC.253/13) on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995. It allows us to take stock of progress made and setbacks encountered in the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

We are encouraged to note in the report that since 1995 there has been progress in some areas, such as literacy, life expectancy, school enrolment, access to basic services, declining infant mortality and incremental movement towards gender equality, as well

as in the allocation of domestic resources for social development.

On the other hand, we note with deep concern that, as stated in the Secretary-General's report,

> "Although relative poverty may have declined, the absolute numbers of people living in poverty globally have continued to grow ...
>
> "Contrary to the commitment made at Copenhagen to strengthen cooperation for social development through the United Nations, resources allocated for this purpose have declined. The burden of debt has also grown markedly". (*A/AC.253/13, para. 5*)

Further actions have to be taken to reverse this situation, with a view to ensuring that deliberate steps forward are taken in the implementation of the decisions made at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, on Social development, held in Geneva last June. Our heads of State and Government assembled at the Millennium Summit decided:

> "To halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and, by the same date, to halve the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water." (*resolution 55/2, United Nations Millennium Declaration, para. 19*)

This decision reaffirms the commitments by Governments to tackle the problem of poverty, in which about 1.2 billion people on our planet are living. The adoption and implementation of effective measures to promote social development and reduce poverty require a multidimensional approach by all national and international actors. The political will of all Governments is fundamental to success.

The cancellation of the external debt of the heavily indebted poor countries is one of the most important measures that must be taken. The debt burden continues to be a significant impediment to development. Fostering debt relief is crucial to ensure sustainable development, taking into account that savings resulting from such cancellations could be utilized in improving social sectors, as we are doing currently in Mozambique under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative and other debt relief measures from which we are benefiting.

Poverty is a global problem, from which Mozambique is not exempt. The incidence of absolute poverty in Mozambique is 69.4 per cent, indicating that more than two thirds of the population live below the poverty line.

The main recommendations of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action were reflected in, and indeed were part of, the five-year programme of the Mozambican Government for 1995-1999. Health, education, food security, water supply and social integration were areas in which the programme had a major impact.

The adoption of the programme led to an increase in the number of health units and improvement in the vaccination coverage of various diseases, particularly those affecting children, as well as in staff training. In the same vein, the Government also approved a strategic plan to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic and halt its rapid spread within the country.

Special attention has also been paid to the area of education. As a result of the implementation of the Government plan, first-level primary schools increased substantially, which, in turn, increased the access of children to schools, with special attention to enrolling more girls.

With regard to food security, the production of grain increased from 1,400,000 tonnes in 1995-96 to 1,500,000 in 1997. These figures illustrate trends leading to food self-sufficiency in the years to come.

Water supply is another area on which the Government of Mozambique has concentrated its efforts. In this regard, 4,000 new boreholes and wells were opened from 1995 to 1998, and 1,700 were rehabilitated. Despite notable progress in this area, only 24 per cent of the population of Mozambique has access to potable water, of whom 44 per cent live in urban areas and 12 per cent in rural areas.

Similarly, the Government focused its efforts on employment creation, which resulted in the training of over 16,000 Mozambicans in various skills, and the granting of 80,000 lines of credit to micro, small, and medium-sized entrepreneurs. Through the implementation of these policies, it was possible to secure about 54,000 new jobs, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable segments of Mozambican society.

In order to foster social development, other diversified programmes and projects have been implemented within the country with a view to assisting those in need, particularly the most vulnerable. To this end, 90,000 households in absolute poverty benefited from food aid and income-generating projects.

In spite of the Government's social development efforts, the problem of poverty is still far from being solved. It is now time to once again rededicate ourselves to this struggle and to implement all the commitments already adopted, particularly after the severe floods that ravaged the south and centre provinces of our country earlier this year, with a negative impact on our previous economic growth.

It was in this spirit that, with a view to reversing the situation of absolute poverty, the Government of Mozambique approved a five-year plan of action for the reduction of poverty in the period 2000-2004. It is a priority Government objective, aimed at developing effective, coordinated activities to reduce absolute poverty in the medium term and to eradicate poverty in the long term. It comprises the following elements: maintaining macroeconomic stability and a rapid and sustainable pace of economic growth; harmony between the action plan and other policy instruments, such as the population policy, the food security strategy, the national strategic plan to fight sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, the post-Beijing action plan and the integrated national social action, employment and youth programme; the allocation of resources to poverty reduction through a medium-term budget policy that includes the development of a medium-term fiscal framework and the harmonization of this instrument with the economic and social plan and the State budget; and guaranteeing institutional coordination and partnership between the Government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious organizations and the private sector on poverty reduction initiatives.

We are encouraged by indications that a growing number of donor countries are considering the cancellation of debt of countries that have shown determination in taking the right decisions to provide a better life for their citizens. We consider that move to be an important contribution to development, as stated in the Millennium Declaration.

My delegation welcomes the decision taken by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund regarding the eligibility of more poor countries to debt relief within the framework of the HIPC Debt Initiative. We regard the Initiative as recognition by the international community of the continued commitment by the Governments of such countries to undertake sound political and economic reforms.

In conclusion, I commend Governments, international and regional organizations, relevant United Nations Agencies and NGOs that have spared no effort in fulfilling their task at all levels to halve poverty within the next 15 years. Our endeavours should continue vigorously until we achieve the total eradication of poverty throughout the world.

Mr. Suh (Republic of Korea): Four months ago Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other actors gathered at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly in Geneva and restated their commitment to place the needs and rights of human beings at the centre of all policies and to realize a society for all in the new millennium.

In the outcome document, entitled "Further initiatives for social development", we all agreed that, while progress has been made in some areas since the Copenhagen Summit, much remains to be done to fulfil the commitments we made there. The outcome document includes various new initiatives to create an enabling environment to achieve the goals of Copenhagen — poverty eradication, full employment and social integration. It is now once again incumbent upon us to translate this outcome document into action.

In order to fulfil three core goals established at Copenhagen and reaffirmed during the special session, we must address some of the basic challenges that we face.

The first challenge is globalization. While it has been praised on the one hand and blamed on the other, we cannot deny that we are living in a world of globalization. In such a world, the capacity of government is weakened when faced with the modern market economy, communication between nations on opposite sides of the world occurs instantly and the benefits of globalization are not evenly distributed. The responsibility is on us to ensure that globalization becomes an opportunity and that its benefits are equitably distributed among groups that have hitherto

been excluded because of their lack of capacity and resources to exploit new opportunities.

Secondly, more and more we witness armed conflicts and humanitarian crises erupting in different parts of the world, threatening even the basic development of our societies. Organized crime and drug abuse are other visible obstacles that have persisted despite our efforts. It is the view of my delegation that these obstacles should be addressed through active and coordinated measures, along with enhanced technical assistance programmes.

Thirdly, it became clear to all of us during the special session that HIV/AIDS has emerged as the most devastating epidemic of our times and that firm international cooperation is urgently needed in order to address this issue. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the initiative of the special session to prevent and protect against HIV/AIDS infection, to address the consequences of HIV/AIDS transmission and to encourage the countries that are most affected by HIV/AIDS to adopt time-bound targets to reduce infection levels. Considering that HIV/AIDS is a matter of human security, my delegation believes the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS in 2001 should be an opportunity to determine all the necessary measures not only to prevent future infections, but also to care for those already suffering.

These challenges are too formidable for individual countries to go it alone. While the primary responsibility for social development lies with the nations themselves, and while each State should make every effort to create a stable, efficient and fair social and economic system through good governance, the importance of sharing best practices and lessons learned among nations cannot be overemphasized. In this respect, my delegation welcomes the outcome document of Copenhagen + 5, which places great emphasis on sharing experiences and best practices in social development in order to promote the goals of the Copenhagen Summit. The Republic of Korea is fully prepared to share with other nations its best practices and lessons learned. My delegation also emphasizes the collective and coordinated efforts of all Member States, the United Nations system and its relevant agencies.

For its part, the Republic of Korea has introduced a series of measures to foster the economic and social development of its people. The 1997 financial crisis, while striking a major blow to a large segment of Korean society, was an opportunity for us to review structural flaws in our economy and society. In particular, it reminded us of the importance of policies to protect vulnerable groups in our society, in response to which the Korean Government introduced and applied a concept of productive welfare that is focused on the capacity-building of individuals. My Government actively implemented policies to create jobs and to provide assistance for small businesses.

As for social integration, my Government has also adopted policy measures to eliminate regional differences and strengthen social welfare for underprivileged groups, such as the aged, the disabled, women, children and the homeless. Moreover, despite limited resources, the proportion of the national budget allocated to national health and welfare has been continuously increasing.

Although many see the multifaceted nature of social development as a hindrance to building a concrete plan of action, we see it as an opportunity to simultaneously address the different challenges we face in overlapping issues. Hence, a comprehensive and integrated approach is critical to addressing these challenges. Even though the special session is over, it gave us encouraging accounts of initiatives and actions that validate the commitment of nations to social development. Let us hope that this momentum is maintained in the coming years and that we will soon come to experience the merits of collaborative efforts.

Mr. Valdez (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are discussing the subject and scope of the World Summit for Social Development separately, but the multidimensional nature of this item obliges us to analyse its objectives comprehensively together with the commitments of other world conferences, such as those of Cairo and Beijing, insofar as they incorporate specific social guidelines and measures.

The international community took on in Copenhagen the challenges of fighting poverty, creating productive employment and strengthening the social fabric. We acknowledged there the potential of civil society to contribute decisively to the effective implementation of social development policies; agreed on the importance of a socially responsible structural adjustment process; emphasized the urgent need for increased cooperation between the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations system; and urged consideration of the external debt problem of Africa,

the least developed countries and the countries with economies in transition. But, above all, we agreed unanimously to place the individual at the heart of development and gave the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action the status of a global commitment.

One of the substantive aspects that emerged from that process was the dawn of universal awareness of the multiple effects of poverty on human development. In this context, we must emphasize the importance of overcoming poverty for the full enjoyment and exercise of the human rights of the world's children, adolescents, youth, women and men. We are convinced that such an approach will allow us to give deserved top priority, at the national and international levels, to the frontal attack on poverty.

We also point out that the basic responsibility for eliminating poverty falls on our Governments, with their respective societies imposing various priorities, with a different intensity and different nuances, in implementing social policies. This means getting all sectors of civil society to work jointly for the benefit of the majority, and particularly for the most vulnerable groups.

There are no rigid strategies, unique formulas or easy measures for eliminating poverty, an objective involving all aspects of human development. Cultural, ethnic and historical identities, as well as the political and economic stability of peoples and countries, are important in determining viable policies and actions.

The all-out attack against poverty also requires solid institutions, adequate financing to make it sustainable, specific programmes that identify regions and pockets of poverty, and the firm political will of Governments. Lack of some of these elements will impede efforts to break the vicious circle of poverty and to achieve a better quality of life for citizens.

In May 1999 we began our work to evaluate implementation of the Copenhagen Social Summit commitments. It took about 13 months to reach a consensus document in Geneva last June. The negotiations were complex and slow, despite the efforts of all delegations and the notable contribution of Ambassador Cristián Maquieira of Chile, Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session.

Globalization and structural adjustment were kept at the centre of the discussion, and they will certainly remain there in the medium term, because of the need to acknowledge their positive and negative aspects. Countries' material conditions are different, and the imbalance between them is clear.

Foreign debt, mechanisms to control capital flows, good governance and labour rights emerged once again during the course of our work. If we are indeed facing a new environment marked by globalization, then we should enter into a dialogue about economic models and appropriate institutions and mechanisms to respond to that new situation. That does not mean imposing, or being rigidly bound by, the rules of a particular model, for there is no single set of rules for overcoming, for instance, financial crises. What is true is that financial crises have in many cases had serious negative impacts within and outside regions, which has meant that resources earmarked for social development have been significantly reduced.

We also saw rigid positions on the issue of financial resources and the decrease in official development assistance, something that will no doubt be a topic for substantive discussions during the current round of negotiations on financing for development and at next year's Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and at other meetings. Strictly speaking, however, this is an issue that is yet to be solved, before donors and aid recipients can jointly undertake the tasks of social development.

My delegation has simply sought to highlight just a few elements of our discussions about this sensitive topic. We are aware of the fact that those discussions will continue. Nevertheless, we wish to point out the inherent value of those discussions for the major commitments made at Copenhagen in 1995, which are still in effect. It is our hope that the recent appraisal undertaken at Geneva will serve as a renewed commitment by our Governments to continue to invest in the social development of our peoples.

Mr. Kuchynski (Ukraine): The 1995 Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development marked a turning point in the perception of social development. For a long time, political leaders had not paid due attention to what is now called development with a human face. In Copenhagen, for the first time, the international community focused on making material improvements in important but often neglected areas of

social concern, such as poverty, unemployment, disease, illiteracy and the condition of the poorest.

Despite the efforts of the international community, there has been little change in the overall situation since Copenhagen. The richest countries are becoming richer, while the poorest are being reduced to misery. Globalization and opportunities for growth have not resolved the disparities that exist among and within countries. In spite of the advances in knowledge and the technological revolution, hunger, disease and poverty have not been eradicated.

This year, five years after the historic adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, the international community took another step forward in its efforts to achieve social development for all by successfully holding the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and adopting a political declaration and an outcome document. This has been further strengthened by the Millennium Summit Declaration, which set quite ambitious goals, in particular with regard to the achievement of sustainable development and the eradication of poverty. We should ask ourselves how those goals can be reached. The answer lies in providing social security for all within democratic States with market economies and civil societies in which human rights and freedoms are respected and each individual can actively shape and influence her or his life.

However, in the globalized and interdependent world in which we now live, that is not enough. A single State cannot achieve sustainable development by itself. Today we are faced with an urgent need for much higher levels of international cooperation based on the principles of non- discrimination, open competition, transparent access for all to global markets and fair and just rules for international trade. Only collective efforts can ensure a better standard of living and greater dignity for all human beings. At the same time, every State should play its own crucial role in developing and maintaining policies to eradicate poverty and enhance productive employment, universal and equal access to basic social services, social protection and support for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

In their aspiration to achieve tangible results on this road, the President and Government of Ukraine are working consistently to translate international strategies and policies in the social sphere into national programmes. The development of a socially oriented economy and the enhancement of social policy based on the efficient use of existing resources were among the ideas incorporated in the presidential initiative entitled "Ukraine: the road to the twenty-first century — strategies of economic and social development for the years of 2000-2004".

Poverty eradication remains at the centre of my country's national policy agenda. In order to solve this problem, we recently adopted a new programme on poverty prevention that includes the protection of citizens' constitutional rights through a system of national minimum standards, motivating work efficacy, entrepreneurial and business activities, increasing citizens' levels of income, increasing minimum wages and improving the social security system.

Understanding that the best way to emerge from poverty and to take a dignified step towards social cohesion is to ensure full employment, we have responded to these needs by introducing an integrated investment programme and by taking various technical, financial and social measures. Specifically, a general plan has been developed to create new employers and to develop legislation on tax benefits for businesses that help to establish new jobs in the demographically disadvantaged areas.

Ukraine spares no effort in its pursuit of its development policy and in reforming labour, employment and social legislation, while doing its utmost to minimize the adverse social impact of the transformation process that is taking place in our country. However, despite all our efforts, our nation currently faces considerable hardships in its social development. Establishing a democratic society based on the principles of a socially oriented market economy is, unfortunately, not an easy task. It has been accompanied by a decline in living standards, a situation that is further aggravated by the environmental crisis and the need to overcome the negative consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe. The latter requires billions of dollars every year.

Another urgent problem is the repatriation and social integration of victims of Stalinist repression, particularly Crimean Tatars. The Government of Ukraine is taking concrete steps to address these and other problems.

A system of anti-crisis measures aimed at stabilizing the country's economy, restructuring

enterprises, improving the taxation and banking systems, overcoming the crisis of non-payments and supporting national production has been developed and is being implemented. As we overcome the financial and economic crisis, we will be able to address vital social problems, in particular normalizing State payments and increasing pensions and other social benefits.

In that regard, we would like to stress the importance of eliminating obstacles to our participation in global economic processes by increasing the openness of international markets to our production, removing tariff barriers, expanding the universal scope of multilateral trade and ensuring the transparency and accountability of financial institutions.

The special session and the Millennium Summit are past history now. The synergy that was demonstrated by Member States, the Bretton Woods institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector provide a common platform on the basis of which we can move ahead; this all gives rise to hope.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): During the special session of the General Assembly held at Geneva last June to consider, five years on, the implementation of the commitments undertaken by a great number of heads of State at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, we sadly realized that the real possibility of meeting those commitments is more remote today than ever before. Doubts about the real possibility of social development have become general among developing countries; the recent Millennium Summit provided an excellent example of that. In the statements by many of our heads of State during the Summit, it was made clear in one way or another that the gap and disparities between developing and industrialized countries, and between high-income and disadvantaged groups in every corner of the Earth have become wider rather than narrower.

All this is taking place in the context of neo-liberal globalization, a phenomenon that was supposed to be able to bring about progress and increased well-being. But it has only expanded and globalized injustice and social marginalization. In today's world, everything is globalized except wealth and economic and social development.

In the developing world, health, safety and nutrition statistics continue to deteriorate, while poverty and unemployment, among other evils, are on the increase. Paradoxically, that is taking place alongside a continuing decline in official development assistance and at a time when structural adjustment policies continue to bring social devastation to many developing countries, when investment flows to many third-world countries are declining and when the foreign-debt payment burden is growing heavier.

How will mankind overcome the horrible situation faced by the third world if the Copenhagen commitments are not met? How will we cope with the dreadful situation faced by the 1.3 billion people who live in absolute poverty, mainly in developing countries? How will we save the 200 million children under age five who suffer from the scourge of malnutrition? How will we save the 12 million children who die annually without even reaching age five? How will we educate the 130 million children who have no access at all to education, plus the 840 million adults who are illiterate? How will we prolong the lives of the 654 million people in the South who will not reach their fortieth year? The wealthier inhabitants of our planet must shoulder their proper commitments undertaken in Copenhagen, and must not evade their responsibilities.

There is no need to formulate new commitments different from those undertaken five years ago. The lack of compliance with the Copenhagen commitments certainly does not mean that those commitments have ceased to be the only real guarantee of social development for developing countries and for socially disadvantaged sectors within the industrialized countries themselves. In that respect, it was significant that the outcome document of the Geneva special session, especially its new initiatives, did not call into question the Copenhagen outcomes, and that by the end of the follow-up process it was clear that the Summit had an indisputable leading role to play with respect to social development.

How can we advance beyond Copenhagen if official development assistance continues to be reduced, if conditions placed on assistance to third-world countries continue to grow harsher, if structural adjustment programmes and prescriptions that ignore social priorities continue to be imposed and if a proper international framework within which to change the existing unjust international economic order fails to be

created? Only by providing a proper international landscape for social development can developing economies make the structural changes that will enable them to implement policies leading to social progress.

Cuba has been successful in implementing social development policies and strategies on the basis of a more just and equitable distribution of our resources. As a result, our country has been able to attain outstanding results vis-à-vis the Copenhagen commitments, and was able to do so long before the holding of the World Summit for Social Development. It is worth mentioning, for example, that 100 per cent of the Cuban population enjoys free access to health and education; that life expectancy is 75 years; that the infant mortality rate is 6.4 per 1,000 live births; that 100 per cent of our children are protected against 11 preventable diseases; that we have one physician per 169 inhabitants; that 99 per cent of our children of primary school age and 95 per cent of those of secondary school age are in school; that one out of five Cubans is a student; that 600,000 students have graduated from our universities; and that illiteracy no longer exists.

The Cuban Government's priority allocation of resources to social activities and its commitment to improving the welfare of its citizens have undoubtedly been a key factor in our having been able to attain social indicators that are better than those seen in many countries with more resources and a higher level of development. All of this testifies to the validity of our approach.

It is worth mentioning, however, that this social progress has been made despite the negative effects of economic war waged by the United States Government against Cuba. That war is most clearly exemplified by the economic, commercial and financial embargo, which has caused more than $67 billion in economic damage to the Cuban economy.

Cuba is willing to share its experience. Progress towards a world of social justice for all will be unlikely without the promotion of cooperation and solidarity. That is the basis for action taken by the Cuban people and its Government. In that respect, let me note that more than 26,000 Cuban health professionals have served in third world countries. Likewise, more than 1,800 Cuban physicians are at present providing free specialized health care in 13 countries of Latin America, Africa and Asia. This is part of a programme that we intend shortly to extend to seven further African countries, as well as to other countries of that continent whose Governments have requested our assistance. Under this programme, nearly 5 million people have received medical care; more than 42,000 surgical operations have been performed and 23,000 babies delivered.

To ensure the sustainability of the programme in the countries in which we are providing assistance, human-resources training programmes have been set up. Thus, a Latin American school of medicine has been opened; 6,000 students will graduate over a 10-year period, and 3,100 students from 20 third-world countries are currently studying there. A Caribbean school of medicine has also been opened with an enrolment of 250 Haitian young people, and new opportunities are also being made available to students from other countries in the region. In our brother continent of Africa, we have continued to promote the establishment of medical schools with Cuban lecturers who will teach without charge.

Unless all the members of the international community, especially the industrialized countries, become involved in promoting and pushing forward the Copenhagen commitments, social development for the third world will continue to be an impossible dream.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the successful twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, held in Geneva last June, Member States jointly reviewed the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action that was adopted five years ago, summarized their achievements and experiences in the field and proposed a series of initiatives on poverty eradication, full employment, social integration and other issues, setting goals for the next stage of global social development. We appreciate the report of the Secretary-General on this special session.

The United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted at the Millennium Summit in September, set out specific objectives regarding global social issues, such as development, poverty eradication, education, drug control and HIV/AIDS. The international community should work together to translate these objectives into realities.

In recent years the international community has been attaching more importance than ever to the issue of social development, which has increasingly become

a priority in the development strategies of all countries, resulting in various degrees of progress. However, work in this field still faces many problems and challenges. Because of the long-standing inequity of the international economic order, countries have not had equal access to the benefits of the globalization process, the gap between the North and the South is widening and poverty is still a huge problem that directly hinders global social development.

According to the Secretary-General's report, the 1 billion people living in the developed countries earn 60 per cent of the world's income, while the 3.5 billion people in the low-income countries earn less than 20 per cent. At present some 1.2 billion people in the world are living on less than $1 a day each. For economic reasons, more than 130 million primary-school-age children in developing countries cannot afford to go to school, and many who do attend drop out. Even worse, diseases of all kinds are damaging people's health while draining the already limited funds available for economic and social development. The spread of HIV/AIDS is further hampering global social development. In 1999 alone, 5.6 million people were infected with HIV, half of them under the age of 25. These appalling figures demonstrate that it will take sustained and strenuous efforts by all Governments and peoples, as well as by the international community as a whole, before the goal of social development and common prosperity for all humankind can be achieved.

The outcome document of the twenty-fourth special session, on social development, in Geneva was not easily achieved. The specific objectives set by the United Nations Millennium Declaration reflect the political will of Governments of all countries. It is now our shared responsibility to take concrete steps to fulfil these commitments. The issue of social development is multifaceted, and Member States made 10 major commitments for further initiatives at the twenty-fourth special session. At this stage, we should direct our limited resources to priority areas. To this end, I would like to highlight the areas on which we should focus our work on social development.

First, poverty eradication is the priority task of social development. At the twenty-fourth special session in Geneva the Assembly made a commitment to reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty by one half by 2015. All countries should work hard to achieve this very concrete objective. It is the responsibility of all Governments, and of peoples themselves, to eradicate poverty and promote development. However, the help and support of the international community are also needed. Developed countries should act for the common good of all humanity and provide, without attaching any political conditions, financial and technological assistance to developing countries and help the latter to achieve their development goals at an early date. This would also be conducive to the further development of the developed countries themselves.

Secondly, education is a basic condition for social development. The quality and pace of a country's social development will be determined by the quality and level of education of its people. Giving priority to education, therefore, and increasing investment in education, is a necessity for the vast number of developing countries if they are to promote social development. In the same spirit, we call on the developed countries to give sincere and real support to developing countries in this regard.

Thirdly, better health is an important component of social development. Diseases and poverty form a vicious cycle that hampers development. All Governments, particularly those of developing countries, should give priority to improving people's health, and especially to curbing the rampant spread of HIV/AIDS. At a time when disease is consuming resources and destroying lives in developing countries, the international community, and the developed countries in particular, should show more concern and provide greater support.

In the five years since the Social Summit, China has overcome many difficulties, achieved rapid economic development and made a great deal of progress in social development. However, like all other developing countries, China still has a long and difficult way to go in the field of social development. Accelerating economic growth, improving living conditions, eradicating poverty, increasing investment in education and providing better medical and health care so as to enhance the quality of people's lives, are the arduous tasks confronting the Chinese Government, which is now making greater efforts in all these areas. The Chinese Government is confident that it will fulfil its commitments and continue to implement coordinated and sustainable economic and social development. We are willing to work together with all

the other countries in the world to achieve social development for all in a globalizing world.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am pleased to take the floor, on behalf of the countries of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — and the associated countries, Bolivia and Chile, to address the Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the special session of the General Assembly in this regard.

Five years ago, heads of State and Government and senior officials from 186 countries, meeting in Copenhagen, adopted a Declaration and a Programme of Action considered to be a new social contract at the global level. The commitments taken on at Copenhagen are still valid. Just over three months ago in Geneva, we had the opportunity to reaffirm these commitments at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, which was convened to review the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on Social Development and to propose new initiatives with regard to social development.

Although five years is a short time to evaluate the progress made, when it comes to implementing the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, it is also true that since the World Summit international reality has greatly changed, and not necessarily always for the better. Since that time, the international community has experienced the opportunities and the risks of globalization and seen a world that is becoming increasingly interdependent. The financial crisis has created serious difficulties for social policy. The international scene continues to be plagued by chronic problems, such as protectionism, especially when it comes to exports of basic products from developing countries, foreign debt, which consumes a great chunk of the resources needed for development, and the reduction in international official development assistance.

The political declaration and the appraisal and implementation of the outcome of the special session, adopted in Geneva, confirm this diagnosis. Nonetheless, the best achievement of the special session was that it reaffirmed the determination to fully implement the commitments taken on at the Copenhagen Summit, while at the same time it approved a complementary agenda designed to promote that implementation.

With this in mind, the MERCOSUR countries, plus Bolivia and Chile, subscribe wholly to the idea that in order to achieve social development, we must integrate economic and social policy, as well as ensure full democracy, the rule of law and the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. At the same time, we remain convinced that, through the active participation of all sectors of civil society, this effort is an indispensable ingredient in our quest for solutions and in the implementation of social projects and programmes. National efforts to make such proposed solutions effective require a favourable international framework, whereby we have a more equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth and opportunities generated by globalization and through free and non-discriminatory international trade.

The challenges facing us are enormous. Eradicating poverty, ensuring full and productive employment and fostering social integration are objectives that our countries support and which are a part of our common agenda. The draft commitment dealing with social development, signed this past September by the Ministers and senior officials of the MERCOSUR countries, plus Bolivia and Chile, shows the determination of our countries to achieve social development.

We realize that the main responsibility for ensuring social development is that of the States. But we are also convinced that a collective undertaking on the part of the international community is essential. For this reason, it is essential that all Governments, particularly those of the developed countries, as well as the United Nations system, substantially intensify international cooperative efforts aimed at sustainable social development.

The MERCOSUR countries, plus Bolivia and Chile, are convinced that if we are to join our efforts at the national, regional and international levels, we will be able to achieve the objectives outlined at Copenhagen and reaffirmed once again in Geneva for a much fairer, more equitable and democratic world. In this way, we will be able to concentrate on one of the central objectives of the United Nations Charter — in other words, "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

Mr. Mohammad Kamal (Malaysia): Our leaders pledged to place people at the centre of sustainable

development when they met in Copenhagen in 1995 at the World Summit for Social Development. They discussed the enhancement of social integration, particularly the involvement of the more disadvantaged and marginalized groups, the elevation and reduction of poverty and the expansion of productive employment. Five years later, when they met again last June at the special session in Geneva to review the implementation of these commitments, they found that the achievement of the goals of the Social Summit had been uneven between different countries and even between sectors within a country. They also noted that sustainable development could not be achieved without the integration of economic and social policies.

The special session, nevertheless, provided an excellent opportunity for us to take stock of lessons and experiences of the past and to move forward equipped with new ideas and future directions. The review showed that the problems of unemployment, poverty, inequality, social exclusion, discrimination, infectious and parasitic diseases, systemic economic crises and civil conflicts have become more acute, not improved, in the five years since the Copenhagen Summit.

Clearly, in a globalized world, poverty and social disintegration constitute a real threat to international peace and prosperity. If we want peace and prosperity, the international community has no alternative but to shoulder a shared responsibility in managing worldwide economic and social development.

My delegation is pleased to note that despite the deep political differences between Member States on international issues such as human rights, governance and globalization, the special session managed to reach agreement on a range of issues so as to produce a comprehensive outcome document. The agreements included a global campaign against poverty, implementation of debt-relief arrangements, empowerment of the poor through access to microcredit schemes, ensuring access to social services, even during times of financial crisis, and seeking new and innovative sources of development finance. At the session it was also agreed to encourage corporate social responsibility and to combat corruption, bribery, money-laundering and the illegal transfer of funds, and to attack the use of tax shelters that undermine national tax systems.

The review undertaken at the Social Summit showed that poverty is still our greatest challenge. Thus the eradication of global poverty must be accorded a high priority in the international agenda. It must be addressed in a multi-pronged manner. Both the public and private sectors must be galvanized to achieve growth with equity. The reality is that we have yet to adequately meet the needs even for decent standards of living, food, housing, literacy and education, health and employment for our societies, particularly for the marginalized and disadvantaged population. The income gap between the rich and poor is widening, not narrowing.

The surest way to eliminate global poverty is to promote sustainable and equitable growth worldwide. The international community at the special session in Geneva committed itself to halving by 2015 the proportion of people living on $1 a day. Collective and coordinated efforts must now be made to fulfil this commitment. Obviously international funding and resources are urgently needed to assist the efforts of the developing countries. The developed countries must fulfil their commitments to ensure that 0.7 per cent of their gross national product is channelled to the development needs of developing countries.

At the Millennium Summit recently, our leaders pledged that the responsibility for managing worldwide economic and social development must be shared among the nations of the world. Global challenges must be managed in accordance with the basic principles of equity and social justice: those who suffer or who benefit the least, deserve help from those who benefit the most.

My delegation is also concerned that social violence against minorities, women and children continues unabated all over the world. The scourges of drugs, transnational crime and killing diseases such as HIV/AIDS do not stop at borders and are spreading rapidly. These are challenges that are beyond the capacity of any one State to counter on its own. There is therefore a need, at the international level, to forge genuine partnerships for the successful implementation of the aspirations of the Social Summit.

In this regard Malaysia urges developed countries to continue to assist developing countries in implementing their social programmes, human-development programmes, education, health training and so forth. We strongly believe that a country's

economic progress should not be negated by social problems such as child abuse and neglect, drug addiction among youth and juvenile delinquency.

Malaysia promotes the concept of balanced development as a major feature of its national development programme. The Government gives serious attention to strategies for generating sustained rapid economic growth and for ensuring that the benefits of economic growth are equitably shared among Malaysians of all ethnic groups in both rural and urban areas. Apart from providing equitable growth, the Malaysian National Development Plan also focuses on the need to balance growth with the protection of the environment and of Malaysia's natural resources.

Malaysia practices a holistic approach to development, by which the Government has taken up all aspects of social development, so as to include all citizens — men and women, the poor, the unemployed and the disadvantaged groups. This philosophy has been mainstreamed in all our major public policies. Malaysia is also working assiduously towards the eradication of hard-core poverty by lowering its incidence to 0.5 per cent this year, so as to fully eradicate absolute poverty in Malaysia by 2005.

In this globalized world of ours, it is now recognized that a diverse range of actors is needed in the development process. This includes civil-society organizations and the private sector playing a role. In this regard, Malaysia welcomes the partnership established by the United Nations, the private sector and civil society in the Global Compact. My delegation concurs that members of civil society — particularly the non-governmental organizations (NG0s) and the private sector — should be encouraged further to collaborate with governments in addressing social ills. We have acknowledged that the NG0s that attended the special session in Geneva made some important contributions to the session, particularly in providing technical expertise.

While international and regional organizations and NG0s can play a pertinent role in complementing and supplementing the efforts of national Governments to address the social-development issues, the primary responsibility for ensuring the success of social programmes for development remains in the hand of governments. Only governments can effectively institute measures to realize the goals of global programmes. The global plans of action can only succeed if States honour their commitment to work concertedly at the local level to achieve the global aspirations.

The three-part outcome document issued by the special session in Geneva was not produced in the one-week meeting in Geneva. It was indeed the result of protracted discussions and deliberations among Member States. It is a culmination of concerted efforts, negotiated positions, compromises and innovations to accommodate the concerns of all. It is our solemn duty now to ensure that follow-up actions are taken to implement the commitments we made in that document. Malaysia, for its part, remains committed to uphold these commitments and will continue to work to strengthen its capacities and capabilities to achieve these goals.

Our task ahead, though challenging, has perhaps been made less difficult now, since 150 of our world leaders, from nations large and small — at the recent, historic Millennium Summit last September — rededicated themselves to supporting all efforts to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character. But, as it is said, the proof is in the pudding.

Ms. Elliott (Guyana): On behalf of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member States, I have the honour to speak on agenda item 37, "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the special session of the General Assembly in this regard".

The important contribution made by the World Summit for Social Development to the international debate on the social imperatives of development in a globalizing world is unquestionable. Its Programme of Action addressed a number of issues of great concern to both developing and developed countries: the scourge of poverty, which was affecting millions of people despite evidence of a dynamic world economy; the blight of unemployment and underemployment, which was constraining the full contribution of all peoples to their societies; and the increasing social exclusion of those without the mobilizing force or voice to draw attention to their particular situation.

At the international level, it was evident that countries and regions were being marginalized in the world economy. Structural adjustment programmes and

high debt-servicing bills were having a devastating effect on the social fabric of most developing countries. Moreover, all these developments were taking place concurrently with the reduced capacity of the state, in most developing countries, to provide basic social services to its citizens and to protect the most vulnerable.

It was therefore with determination and high political will that Member States, over the past five years, have sought to achieve the goals set by our heads of State or Government at the World Summit. In CARICOM member States, special attention is given to an integrated socio-economic approach to national policy-making, in recognition of the fact that economic growth and effective social policy are mutually reinforcing, particularly to achieve poverty eradication, full employment and social integration.

Regular meetings of the CARICOM Ministerial Council for Human and Social Development have provided an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of our policies and programmes. These assessments take account of the increasing number of actors involved in the provision of social services; the extent of equitable delivery of, and access to, such services; the effectiveness of social protection programmes; and the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of society.

Although most CARICOM countries in the past have sought to publicly finance social protection through universal coverage, increasingly assistance gas become targeted and income-based. At the same time, however, the country has become conscious of the challenge often posed by the superior services available from private proprietors, whose high fees may make their services inaccessible to the poorer segments of society.

The review process of the special session of the General Assembly highlighted a number of these challenges and acknowledged that the progress made in achieving the goals set at Copenhagen has been at best uneven. It found that the benefits of social and economic development were still concentrated in a few countries, and the number of people living in extreme poverty had increased.

Poverty persists due to lack of resources, inadequate levels of economic development, worsening terms of trade, in most cases, weakened structure, inefficient administrative systems, continuing disparities in access to basic social services, including education, and the feminization of poverty. Indeed, the 1999 United Nations Development Programme *Human Development Report* had recognized these trends in pointing out that the ratio of the income of the fifth of the world's people living in the richest countries to that of the fifth in the poorest rose from 30:1 in 1960 to 60:1 in 1990 and 74:1 in 1997. By the end of the 1990s, the fifth of the world's people living in the highest-income countries enjoyed 86 per cent of the world's gross domestic product, compared to 1 per cent for the poorest fifth; 82 per cent of the world export market, compared to 1 per cent for the poorest fifth; and 68 per cent of foreign direct investment, compared to 1 per cent for the poorest fifth.

These global disparities and the concentration of wealth and income in a few countries must be overcome if the international community is to realistically achieve the task set at Copenhagen of addressing the underlying and structural causes of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion in order to reduce uncertainty and insecurity in the life of all peoples.

In this regard, CARICOM welcomes the commitments made by a number of donor countries last June to contribute to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative Fund, to write off loans for a number of developing countries and to cancel the interest due from others, to increase their official development assistance despite having reached the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product, to contribute to projects in developing countries in the areas of education and combating HIV/AIDS, to provide support for institutional regulatory systems in developing countries, and to provide financial assistance to the United Nations system and other international organizations for programmes aimed at poverty eradication and other Copenhagen goals.

It is the hope of CARICOM member States that all donor countries will support the strong commitment demonstrated by a number of donor countries. The region reiterates the importance of achieving the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance. The leadership role assumed by some developed countries in international policy-making must also be translated into concrete action to benefit poorer countries.

The international community is very much aware that despite a very high per-capita income and a dynamic economy, there are cases of donor Governments contributing less than 0.2 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance, of which less than a fifth is directed to least developed countries. In fact, a 2000 study on global poverty indicates that the official development assistance contribution of one such country, whose average income is more than $30,000 and where investors have enjoyed more than $7 trillion in capital gains in 1996, amounts to approximately $4.95 per national per year. For the recipient 600 million people in the least developed countries in 1998, this aid is just about $2.20 per person from that donor country.

On the other hand, for the 3.4 billion people in all low-income countries, as defined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), this sum is even lower. It amounts to $1.13 per person.

With an enabling international environment and concerted action at the national level to promote social development, there is no doubt that the goals of the World Summit are achievable. It is the hope of CARICOM that further actions and initiatives, agreed upon last June by the international community, will provide the much-needed impetus for greater success.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has made a number of interesting proposals for increasing market access for the exports of developing countries for social development which should also be considered, for in the final analysis there can be no equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth within and among countries if there is negligible or no growth in developing countries.

A related issue of particular importance to CARICOM is the recommendation for more effective involvement of developing countries in international economic decision-making processes. We see this recommendation linked to the fourth principle of the Copenhagen Declaration, which stresses the importance of democracy and transparent and accountable governance and administration for the realization of social and people-centred sustainable development. Governance and democracy must not be confined to the national level, but must also contribute to international processes.

In conclusion, may I reaffirm the commitment of CARICOM member States to achieving the goals of the World Summit for Social Development. If its national initiatives continue, the region will continue to participate actively in the efforts of the international community to ensure that the international environment is propitious for social development. In this regard, we believe that the early and full implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted last September, will give great impetus to efforts aimed at an improved international environment.

Similarly, the outcome of the international conferences in 2001 on financing for development, the least developed countries, HIV/AIDS, children, and racism and related intolerance must be seen as reinforcing the principles established at Copenhagen.

Mr. Mmualefe (Botswana): It is indeed a privilege for Botswana to address the General Assembly on agenda item 37, on implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the special session of the General Assembly, on behalf of the members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC): Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In June 2000, we met in Geneva for the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. By all accounts, this special session was successful in focusing attention on the daunting challenges facing humankind. It presented an opportunity for the international community to adopt forward-looking and resolute approaches in addressing social development and human prosperity.

SADC wishes to acknowledge the positive contributions of the various United Nations agencies and the Commission on Sustainable Development to the comprehensive preparatory process for the special session.

SADC concurs with the report of the Secretary-General in document A/55/344 that an important element that led to the success of the special session was the system-wide participation of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and a broad range of civil society organizations. Although it is recognized that advancing social development is first and foremost the responsibility of Governments, we wish to emphasize that fostering smart partnerships

with non-governmental actors is a critical and necessary measure. It is imperative for the international community to uphold its commitments, inter alia, first, to promoting sustainable development; secondly, to halving poverty by 2015; thirdly, to promoting full and productive employment; and fourthly, to achieving social development.

It was appropriate that globalization formed an integral part of the Copenhagen review, since globalization is a major economic trend that is transforming and reconfiguring national, regional and international economies as we enter the twenty-first century. It is a fact that a large majority of African countries have not been able to participate in the global economy and as a result experienced only 2.8 per cent growth in 1999. SADC agrees that, within the United Nations, there is a need to come to a concrete agreement on a model of globalization which will be inclusive and lead not only to enhanced trade and financial flows, but to an improvement in the standards and quality of life of citizens.

Specifically at the national level, globalization should empower countries to alienate poverty and address unemployment, technology transfer, health concerns and so on. Unfortunately, this ideal cannot be realized without the concerted efforts of governments and multilateral institutions in terms of strengthening national capacities to take advantage of the opportunities of globalization. In this regard, we are confident that the 2001 international event on financing for development will put the necessary focus on issues of globalization.

For our part, SADC member States have taken concrete steps to inject growth into their economies to enhance regional and global trade. Incremental steps to realize our shared vision of creating a single economic space are being taken, the latest being the adoption of a trade protocol in September of this year. It is projected that a regional growth rate of 3.5 per cent will be realized in the year 2000. This is a positive signal. Regrettably, it is not enough to make a significant dent in poverty within the SADC region.

Poverty eradication was central to the social development Summit. We are all quite familiar with the distressing statistics of 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty today, 300 million of them in Africa. SADC is committed to the eradication of poverty and also strongly submits that poverty eradication cannot be addressed in isolation from the broader socio-economic context. The commitments we undertook on further initiatives, as reflected in section II of document A/55/344, attest to this fact.

The SADC *Regional Human Development Report 1998* revealed that 40 per cent of the region's population lives in poverty, with women and children disproportionately affected. In addition, efforts to enhance social development in SADC have been constrained by natural disasters and protracted armed conflict. This Assembly will recall that the region experienced heavy flooding early this year, which took a toll on lives, destroyed infrastructure and disrupted economic activity, particularly in Mozambique. This disaster was a tremendous setback to development. SADC wishes to thank those who came to the region's assistance during this hour of need. The Assembly is also aware of the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola, which are a hindrance to the sustainable development of the region. Peaceful resolution of these conflicts is a preoccupation of our leaders, since we recognize that, without peace, there is little chance of socio-economic progress. These natural and man-made disasters have no doubt conspired to hamper the efforts of our citizens to pursue productive activities that could enable them to lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

The SADC Summit held in Namibia last August noted that the region would incur a cereal deficit of over 600,000 tons in the production year 2000/2001. This will naturally have a bearing on regional food security, particularly for poor rural women, older persons and other vulnerable groups of society.

AIDS is a major human tragedy and development challenge, with serious socio-economic implications for all sectors of our communities and societies. Southern Africa is the region worst affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In some countries, over 10 per cent of the adult population is infected, with the incidence being higher among the youth. HIV/AIDS will therefore destroy the very core of the future of the region if it goes unchecked. We are pleased that the United Nations system has also identified HIV/AIDS as a priority area of focus. The Copenhagen review went a step further to enjoin the World Health Organization, pharmaceutical companies and others to provide essential and affordable drugs for the treatment of HIV/AIDS related conditions. The very same

dialogue is ongoing within the SADC HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework and Programme of Action.

The international community needs to be fully engaged in the fight against this pandemic because diseases, like most natural calamities, have no boundaries at all. For this reason, SADC appreciates the fact that the Millennium Summit put the issue of HIV/AIDS at the fore. We also wish to welcome the decision to convene a special session on HIV/AIDS, as well as the positive outcome of informal consultations on this issue.

In the context of Africa, the quest to achieve social development cannot be viewed in isolation from the broad development context. External debt servicing continues to divert valuable resources from social development thereby perpetuating poverty. We regret to note that the debt profile of SADC countries reveals that debt owed to multilateral institutions continues to pose a heavy burden on our economies. Nonetheless, we appreciate the steps taken by some bilateral donors to cancel debt and hope this will be emulated by others.

There can be no meaningful development without education. Universal basic education for all children, without discrimination, should in the twenty-first century no longer be a mere ideal, but a human right, as spelled out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. SADC is committed to ensuring education for all in as short a time span as possible. Particular attention is being paid to bridging the enrolment and retention of girls in schools.

Our vision is to go a step further and acquire technology, particularly information technology, and channel it towards development. In this regard, the Economic and Social Council 2000 High-Level Segment on information technology and development was appropriate and very timely. We thus call upon our development partners to make technology more accessible and to bridge the digital divide.

As the Secretary-General's report indicates, gains have been made on major substantive areas. The special session made emphatic pronouncements on the empowerment of women, the problem of refugees, youth, older persons and people with disabilities. SADC renewed its commitment to target these population groups so as to ensure that their needs are integrated into social development policies. The special session also took a bold stance on workers' rights and the elimination of child labour. For these reasons SADC is satisfied that the intent and principles of the Copenhagen Plan of Action were upheld.

The path forward has been paved by the special session. Goals and targets have been set. However, the financing gap remains a huge impediment to progress. This situation is also compounded by the declining levels of official development assistance. The implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development has revealed the chronic problem of lack of international support to social development on the part of major donors. SADC reiterates its call to major donors to meet the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP as official development assistance.

The Millennium Summit provided the necessary impetus for the full implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations conferences. SADC wishes to stress that the worth of these conferences lies in the impact they will have on the lives of men, women and children globally.

Mr. Al-Hariri (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Five years have elapsed since the World Summit for Social Development, which was an important landmark and in which we all expressed our aspirations for a better future in which man would enjoy prosperity and freedom from poverty, disease, want, ignorance and many other problems afflicting various societies and nations. The twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly was held in order to reaffirm those aspirations.

The political declaration adopted by the session emphasized the pledge made by the international community to pay particular attention to the struggle against circumstances that pose grave threats to health, peace, security and prosperity of peoples of the world and to give priority to that struggle. The Copenhagen Summit made commitments, some of which would be shouldered by national Governments and others by the international community.

Five years after the Summit, we notice that international cooperation has dropped to its lowest level, at a time when developing countries are trying to shoulder responsibilities within the limits of their resources. The developed countries have not implemented the commitments they made at the Summit. In addition, there are the new challenges posed by globalization and its impact on the economies of developing countries. The current patterns of globalization have spread a sense of insecurity and

have tended to marginalize some countries in the world economy, particularly developing ones.

The rates of international trade exchange have worsened, and concessional financial resources given to developing countries have decreased. The burden of indebtedness has weakened the ability of many Governments to service their increasing external debt and has led to the erosion of whatever resources were available for social development.

Not only does social development need economic activity, but it also needs efforts to ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth and the benefits of economic growth among nations, including the establishment of a multilateral international trade system based on law and characterized by openness, equity, stability, transparency and non-discrimination. Such a system would increase available opportunities, ensure social justice and recognize interdependence between social development and economic growth.

Syria has embarked on a process of comprehensive development aimed at increasing man's sense of his importance as a human being, increasing his freedom and developing his personality. On this basis, social and economic development plans in Syria have concentrated on the development of resources and the raising of material, social, cultural and health standards of man, these being the instruments and objectives of development. In order to combat poverty and eliminate it, the Government has adopted a number of national policies and programmes, both social and economic, to develop all resources, complete the development of the agricultural and industrial sectors and modernize the transport and communications sector. The Government has also given assistance to small producers and subsidies for basic foodstuffs. In addition, it provides health services and free education at all levels to its citizens. It provides various kinds of social services to poor families and to the vulnerable elements of society, including the disabled, orphans, the aged and others. This was done in cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

In cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a draft national plan was drawn up to raise the standard of nutrition, and workshops were organized to reduce poverty. In cooperation with UNDP blueprints were adopted for a field study dealing with the delineation of the poverty line in Syria.

As regards labour and the labour force, the Syrian Constitution has provided for equal employment opportunities for all citizens, and the Government has tried to organize labour relations by issuing many laws protecting workers. It has also incorporated provisions for the employment of women and juveniles. There are provisions that ensure equality between men and women without discrimination. The State also upholds the principle of equal opportunities for all citizens, including the disabled.

The Government has tried to support people's access to productive work through systems of education and vocational training. Our education policy has concentrated on the need to ensure democracy in education for all — males and females. Education is compulsory through the elementary level. Efforts are also being made to develop vocational training and to link education, development and illiteracy. The education budget has been increased.

Foreign occupation constitutes a great impediment to social development and social integration. In this respect, I must emphasize that Israel's occupation of the Syrian Arab Golan has led to the displacement of about half a million Syrian citizens. As a result, they have suffered from poverty and deprivation, and many women have become the breadwinners, since they have lost their male breadwinners.

In spite of the many efforts to ensure a minimum standard of living, there is a need for more resources and for a greater expansion of services, since the State is obliged annually to shoulder many burdens due to the Israeli occupation that dominates the wealth and resources of the Golan and strives to loot these resources. Israel tries to build and expand settlements with a view to changing the demographic character of my country. This has a negative effect on Syria's economic and social development programmes.

The international community is called upon today more than ever before to pressure Israel to comply with the resolutions of international legitimacy and to end its hateful occupation of the Syrian Arab Golan and the other occupied Arab territories, in order to ensure peace, security and stability in the region, to promote social development and to enable refugees to return to

their homeland and thus provide a favourable environment for sustainable social development.

The President returned to the Chair.

We all look forward to a world in which relations are based on mutual understanding and equality, a world in which man can really enjoy prosperity and happiness, free of poverty and injustice, a world devoid of hegemony, imperialism and foreign occupation. To achieve this, we have to increase international cooperation and implement the commitments undertaken by the international community in Copenhagen and reaffirmed in Geneva this year.

Mr. Ben Mustapha (Tunisia) *(spoke in Arabic)*: Assessment and monitoring of the results and recommendations of the World Summit for Social Development and the results of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly offer an opportunity to affirm the Declaration and the Programme of Action accepted by the international community, assess progress in social development and examine the restraints that continue to prevent its full implementation.

One commitment is to the creation of an enabling national and international environment to achieve full, comprehensive and sustainable development; eradicate poverty; create employment opportunities; provide basic services, with special attention to education and health; and support the position of women and protect children.

We believe that globalization, which characterized the end of the century, has led to greater, unprecedented wealth and to increased capital flows. We have also seen some negative trends, which, if not contained, might lead to further imbalances in international relations and development patterns and to the marginalization of a number of societies. The international community is called upon to deal firmly with these negative aspects of globalization, provide greater balance and give it the human face that it needs, particularly since the Millennium Summit of heads of State and Government affirmed in its Declaration the need to make the right to development a reality and to protect people from want.

The Tunisian experience in social development has been within the framework of international humanitarian directives. We have worked on implementing the recommendations of international conferences, with comprehensive development programmes based on convergence with international interests. The most important are the following: first, interconnection of the economic and social dimensions while firmly securing human rights in their comprehensive and integrated sense and activating the role of civil society; secondly, achieving protection for all members of society and providing a dignified way of life with equal employment opportunities for everybody, without marginalization; thirdly, protection from social ills and preventing their spread, intensifying and developing care and social security for vulnerable members of society, promoting the role of women and providing protection for the rights of the child and the family as a whole, as a means of stability and development of society; and lastly, promoting solidarity between various generations and groups of society through programmes to protect the environment, thus providing suitable circumstances for sustainable development.

The deteriorating situation in a number of least developed countries is a cause for anxiety. The international community must work to overcome it.

The Millennium Summit made the eradication of poverty one of its priorities, deciding to halve it by 2015 and to halve the number of people in the world whose income is less than $1 a day. The special session of the General Assembly to follow up on implementation of the recommendations of the Social Summit, also devoted much discussion to this topic.

Regarding the need to entrench the values of solidarity and integration among peoples and States, the President of the Republic of Tunisia, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, has proposed to all heads of State and to the United Nations the establishment of a global solidarity fund which would seek voluntary contributions to combat poverty and marginalization and improve conditions in the poverty-stricken parts of the world, particularly in Africa. Tunisia is trying to gather consensus on this humanitarian project and to finalize its development so that the international community can better respond to the recommendations of the Copenhagen and Geneva summits.

In addition to the Tunis initiative, the Group of 77 and China have submitted to the Second Committee a draft resolution on agenda item 99, "Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)". Tunisia highly appreciates

Members' support for the draft resolution, which it hopes will be accepted by consensus, so that we may enhance the mechanism for combating poverty and confront the challenges faced by all, in keeping with our commitment to begin the new millennium meeting the challenge of want, which we regard as one of the major reasons for instability and tension throughout the world and for the exclusion of entire societies from economic development.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): At the twenty-fourth special session in June this year we completed the first five-year review of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. The review was a forceful reminder that the follow-up process has just started and that the challenges facing us are tremendous. The fact that 1.2 billion people still live in absolute poverty on less than a dollar a day is in itself a strong reminder that there is no time to lose. It is time for us to act.

Another forceful reminder of the need to act, and to act now, is the disastrous proportions that the HIV/AIDS pandemic is reaching. The virus is spreading fastest in those parts of the world with the least resources to deal with it. Many of the gains achieved during the past decades, such as the significant increase in life expectancy, are now being eroded by the pandemic. We cannot implement the Copenhagen commitments without responding to this challenge. The upcoming special session on HIV/AIDS will provide an important opportunity for the international community to take stock and agree on new and strengthened action in this field. Norway has already decided to double its funding for multilateral aid programmes and to engage more broadly in meeting the challenges that AIDS poses to development.

If one of the goals we agreed on during the special session in Geneva were to be singled out, it would have to be to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. Most, or all, of the other initiatives we identified will be part of, and will contribute to, our efforts to achieve this overriding objective. Achieving the goals of the Summit and implementing the initiatives identified at the special session will require a strong commitment on the part of all relevant actors, the mobilization of resources and effective and efficient institutions working in partnership.

Let me first turn to the issue of resources. The financing of social development is essential. Development cooperation is an important element in this picture, in particular for Africa and the least developed countries. We therefore urge more donor countries to follow up on their agreed United Nations obligations and, if possible, exceed them. Failure to live up to commitments made has all too often been a major obstacle to progress. The Government of Norway is determined to go beyond our current level of official development assistance of 0.9 per cent of gross domestic product to a full 1 per cent. In its budget proposals for 2001, the Government has increased official development assistance by $170 million. It is, furthermore, proposing to significantly increase the share of our official development assistance that is allocated through the United Nations.

How official development assistance resources are spent is also important. One of the key messages of the Social Summit was that full and equal access to basic social services is essential for economic and social development in general and for poverty reduction in particular. This must be reflected in our development cooperation. In Geneva, donor and recipient countries were urged to fully implement the 20/20 initiative. We are very pleased to see that this initiative now enjoys broad international support. Norway will continue to advocate the implementation of the 20/20 initiative, both bilaterally with our development partners and through broader international cooperation.

Increased official development assistance is one of the key building blocks in the new development architecture. But development cooperation is not a narrow niche. It is, and must be, an umbrella covering much, much more than aid alone, and a more development-friendly international framework for trade and investment is necessary to promote sustainable development.

Debt relief is another major challenge. Full and equitable financing of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries mechanism is a litmus test of the international community's ability to keep its word.

The upcoming high-level event on financing for development will give us an opportunity to analyse all these related issues in a coordinated manner. The inclusive format of the conference augurs well for

innovative thinking. This opportunity must not be missed.

The ongoing efforts in many countries to develop national strategies for poverty reduction must be supported by the international community. The United Nations has a crucial role to play in this regard, alongside and in partnership with the Bretton Woods institutions and other relevant multilateral organizations. We must strengthen the United Nations to enable it to play its role fully and effectively, and we must urge the multilateral system to work more closely together to develop more coherent policy approaches and better coordinate its programme activities. What we want to see is a genuine partnership based on the recognition of the strength and potential of each institution. Fighting poverty, unemployment and social exclusion is the responsibility not only of Governments and the international community, but also of the private sector and civil society. We need to be better at bringing all these actors together so that they can work for our common goals.

New and interesting forms of public/private partnerships have recently been formed. Two innovative and promising examples are the International Partnership against AIDS in Africa and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), both designed as broad coalitions of Governments, multilateral organizations, bilateral donors, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. They could serve as pathfinders in our search for more effective ways of promoting development. Norway warmly welcomes these initiatives and has pledged substantial financial support for both. Norway firmly believes that innovative partnerships such as GAVI will strengthen the role and effectiveness of the United Nations. They should be seen not as undermining the authority of the United Nations, but, on the contrary, as additional vehicles to enhance the legitimacy and influence of the world Organization.

Norway gives high priority to the implementation of the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit. We will continue to work with our partners to ensure that, together, we fulfil our commitments.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The twenty-fourth special session of the United Nations General Assembly, on social development, which was held in Geneva in June of this year to review and appraise the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action adopted an outcome document to further achieve such objectives of the World Summit for Social Development as poverty eradication, employment and social integration. As many delegations at the special session mentioned, the international community is giving greater attention to social development, as United Nations agencies and regional organizations are actively involved in activities to the implement the Summit's Declaration and Programme of Action. However, the objectives of the Social Development Summit have not yet been achieved, and some of them have been further eroded by such new challenges as the negative impact of globalization.

We note that since the holding of the World Summit for Social Development the number of poor people has increased to 1.4 billion, unemployment has reached 1 billion, and endemic social evils continue to exist. Social problems such as poverty, unemployment and lack of education and health services, as well as problems related to ageing and women's issues, are of common concern to both developed and developing countries, while poverty eradication and the problems related to health are more critical to developing countries. The current session of the General Assembly has been entrusted with tackling these problems and finding appropriate solutions to them as one of its major tasks.

The final document of the twenty-fourth special session indicates that each country has a responsibility to establish a suitable strategy for social development in order to achieve the objectives of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. It also indicated that sustained economic development and a favourable international environment are essential in order to meet those goals. The final document also stressed the need to enhance the role of the organizations of the United Nations system in eradicating poverty, and the need for policy reform on the part of international financial institutions.

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is of the view that the following points deserve particular attention in efforts to implement successfully the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development.

First, each country needs to set out a national strategy for social development in conformity with its internal reality, and adopt appropriate social policies. Each country's national strategy and policies for achieving the objectives set for us by the World Summit for Social Development can be made more effective if they are attuned to the current situation of the country. In order to achieve social development, particular attention should be given to education and health care, along with poverty eradication and employment, and social policies should be in line with the level of economic development.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea consistently adheres to that principle by introducing social policies to ensure that people enjoy free education and health-care benefits, even though the country is experiencing difficulties as a result of the continuing economic sanctions imposed on it by other forces seeking to stifle its system. Today, my country is striving to overcome the aftermath of natural disasters and to improve the living conditions of its people by achieving economic growth while relying on its self-sufficient national economy.

Secondly, sustained economic development is another important factor in achieving social development. Social and economic development must be inter-linked so as to promote sustained economic development, particularly in developing countries. The new challenges posed by globalization should be reviewed and resolved properly. In this regard, globalization should not be imposed on developing countries. An equitable international economic order needs to be established in favour of developing countries. Coordination and review of international trade policy and of the rules and policies of the international financial institutions are needed in order to provide benefits to developing countries. Attention should also be paid to foreign-debt relief for developing countries, as well as to increasing official development assistance and technology-transfers to those countries.

Thirdly, a peaceful and stable international environment should be created. Regardless of their size, conflicts and disputes pose a threat to the lives of many people and have a negative impact on overall social and economic development, not only in the countries concerned, but also in neighbouring countries and countries of the region. Unless solutions to conflicts are found, social development will be greatly hindered. Finding adequate solutions to conflicts is of major importance in creating a favourable international environment for social development. Disputes of all kinds should be resolved through dialogue and consultation. Encroachment upon State sovereignty and interference in the internal affairs of States, which often take the form of military threats and sanctions, should be avoided.

As we embark upon the new millennium, my delegation will cooperate fully with other delegations and exert every effort during the current session to work out solutions aimed at improving attainment of the objectives of the World Summit for Social Development.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): Social development is about empowerment of the human person. It touches everyone's life. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services. The World Summit for Social Development reflected the international community's vision of creating a just and equitable world for all. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Summit identified three core areas — namely, poverty eradication, generation of full employment and social integration — aimed at translating that vision into a living reality.

The five-year review of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit, which took place at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, held at Geneva this June, indicated that, since Copenhagen, inequalities within and among countries have been further aggravated, poverty has deepened, and social exclusion and social disintegration have increased. Recent statistics indicate that, worldwide, 1.6 billion people are worse off than they were 15 years ago. Of the 4.4 billion people living in developing countries, three fifths lack access to basic sanitation, one third have no access to clean drinking water and one fifth no access to even moderate medical care. The Secretary-General's millennium report (A/54/2000) confirmed that abysmal state of social indicators.

Poverty is the worst violator of human dignity and of human rights. About 3,000 years ago, Aristotle observed that poverty was a parent of revolution and crime. More recently, Alfred Marshall, in his famous

Principles of Economics, stated that study of the causes of poverty was the study of the causes of the degradation of a large part of mankind. The World Conference on Human Rights, held at Vienna in 1993, recognized that the existence of widespread extreme poverty inhibited full and effective enjoyment of human rights and that its immediate alleviation and eventual elimination must remain a high priority for the international community.

At Copenhagen the international community recognized that broad-based and sustained economic growth was a prerequisite for eradicating poverty and promoting development. That has been reaffirmed by the Copenhagen + 5 outcome document, which set the framework for concerted national and international action to promote just and equitable social development. It is encouraging that both the Copenhagen + 5 outcome document and the United Nations Millennium Declaration set the target of reducing by half the number of people living in poverty by the year 2015.

Regrettably, the prevailing international environment constrains the ability of most of the developing countries to create conditions for broad-based and sustained economic growth in an increasingly integrated world economy. The attainment of the targets agreed at the social Summit would require the mobilization of adequate resources for social spending during the next decade. Globalization poses new challenges to developing countries. An enabling international environment would greatly help developing countries to achieve broad-based sustained growth. The international community must work in a spirit of partnership and a shared future to achieve that objective.

The unsustainable external debt burden has crippled the capacity of developing countries to make investments in social development. That problem must be addressed expeditiously. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative is encouraging, but it should be realized that highly indebted poor countries account for only 10 per cent of developing-country debt. The rest is owed by middle-income and low-income countries. Their ability to achieve social objectives is severely constrained by the overriding priority of servicing and repaying external debt. Indebted developing countries should be allowed to utilize resources allocated to debt servicing for development of the social sector, especially education and health care. Substantive debt relief through innovative approaches would strengthen a new economic partnership between the North and the South.

The persistent decline in flows of official development assistance should be reversed. At the same time, international trade rules should be implemented in a manner that would ensure a truly level playing field for developing countries. The products of developing countries should be provided preferential access to international markets to generate resources necessary for their economic and social development. There should be no manipulation of the prices of commodities emanating from the developing world. Technology has emerged as the main decisive factor in generating wealth and in sustaining prosperity. The ability of developing countries to generate and acquire technology must be improved.

The maintenance of peace and security through the peaceful resolution of disputes would significantly contribute to the release of resources for economic and social development. In his millennium report (A/54/2000), the Secretary-General highlighted the tragedy that conflicts and civil wars continue to inflict upon individuals and societies. It cannot be overemphasized that regions mired in armed conflicts are among the poorest and that they are at the tail end of the United Nations Development Programme's human development index. In our own region, the unresolved issue of Jammu and Kashmir has been one of the major reasons for the disproportionate spending on armaments that has adversely affected the economic and social development of the entire region, which is home to one fifth of humanity. The international community, particularly the United Nations, must strengthen its efforts to resolve all outstanding disputes through peaceful means, which would generate enormous resources for investment in social sectors.

For our part, despite enormous financial constraints and in the absence of an enabling international environment, Pakistan has continued its efforts to improve quality of life, particularly for the vulnerable segments of society. In the national budget for 2000-2001, 35 billion rupees have been earmarked for the Government's poverty reduction programme, with particular emphasis on rural areas. The Government has also established a micro-credit bank as part of efforts to reduce the incidence of poverty in the country. The Government is also in the process of

earmarking 50 per cent of the credit from the micro-credit bank for women living in poverty.

The Government of Pakistan also attaches special importance to achieving the objective of universal access to education. Already, primary school enrolment for both boys and girls has increased from 55 per cent in 1995 to 75 per cent in 2000. The Government is currently in the process of implementing a three-year literacy programme, in partnership with private and public-sector organizations, with particular emphasis on rural areas. That programme is aimed at ensuring compulsory education for every child, reducing the gender gap in literacy from the existing 11 per cent to 5 per cent, and increasing female literacy to 50 per cent by 2003.

In August this year the Government announced the Devolution of Power and Responsibility Plan for the establishment of elected local governments. The plan reserves 33 per cent of seats in all elected bodies, from union council to district level, for women candidates. The electoral process for local and district government bodies will start on 1 December this year. We believe that this bottom-up approach will go a long way towards ensuring participatory, inclusive and accountable governance from the grass-roots level upwards.

Finally, the vision of a just and equitable world, which the world leaders, meeting in Copenhagen, agreed to create, is achievable, and must be achieved. It will require the establishment of a strong partnership between the developed and developing countries in order to share, in a spirit of solidarity, the benefits of a prosperous and peaceful world.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): I hope that the fact that the General Assembly Hall is so sparsely populated this evening in no way reflects our commitment to the effective follow-up of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.

An unprecedented number of heads of State or Government came together at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 to express collectively their political will to accord increased priority to social development. Since the Summit, there has been wider recognition of the importance of making social development an integral part of development strategy, both at the national and international levels, putting people at the centre of development.

Five years later, we reviewed the implementation of the goals of the Summit. It was clear that, although there had been many gains, the achievement of the goals would require much stronger and more comprehensive action and new, innovative approaches. It was also clear that new challenges posed by globalization and interdependence had to be factored into the steps we would take in future.

At the review conference in Geneva in 2000 we adopted a blueprint for social development for all in the twenty-first century. In addition to the Copenhagen commitments, this follow-up programme of action provides for specific measures at all levels, involving a variety of actors. It promises that gains in social development will be consolidated and setbacks reversed, in particular through the realization of the opportunities offered by globalization.

The Millennium Summit Declaration reinforced the critical need for social development and, again, an unprecedented number of world leaders committed themselves to many of its aspects. It reinforces our collective efforts to ensure better living for all human beings in greater equity and dignity.

Bangladesh believes that eight areas need careful consideration to ensure social development for all.

First, an enabling environment should be created. Social development cannot happen in isolation. We have seen achievements reversed by global influences that are beyond the control of individual countries. We see emerging globalized economic and trading regimes in which marginalization and exclusion persist. We have seen assistance diminish and debts grow, and international financial systems have yet to integrate fully social objectives into their policies and implement them. In Geneva in 2000 — and before that in Copenhagen — we promised an environment that is enabling, and not disabling, for developing countries, and agreed to assist them by sharing information, helping to build capacities and reducing the debt burden and the negative impact of international financial turbulence. We have to deliver on those promises.

Second, we must work effectively towards poverty eradication. These days, poverty eradication seems to be the buzz-word. Everyone is on board in the fight against poverty. Yet poverty is persisting. Unless poverty eradication measures focus solely on the well-

being of the poor and ensure their involvement in the process, results will continue to elude us.

From our experience in Bangladesh, we have found that the most effective way of addressing poverty is by enabling the poor to help themselves. Much has been said about the success of microcredit. We have found that there is more to microcredit than bringing out the entrepreneur in the poor, especially poor women. In a comprehensive anti-poverty initiative for homeless families, we are effectively using microcredit to provide shelter and livelihood, and have combined it with the provision of health care, education, nutrition, family welfare services and community development.

Third, we must make women matter in social development. The outcome document of the special session in Geneva states that women and men experience poverty differently and unequally and become impoverished through different processes, and that if those differences are not taken into account, the causes of poverty cannot be dealt with by public actions.

This is one element that has not always been the case. The disparity from which women suffer, in terms of their involvement in decision-making on social development and in the delivery of services, and as the recipients of such services, has to be addressed urgently. If there were more women involved in decision-making, especially at the local level, it could result in a better balance in policy and in resource flows to social development and gender equality. In Bangladesh, we are benefiting from the direct election of over 14,000 women to local councils as a result of a recent provision, which has contributed to more gender-sensitive policy-making, resource allocation and implementation of local and community-based programmes.

Fourth, we must protect the vulnerable by enhancing social safety nets. For developing countries, the challenge is twofold. On the one hand, traditional and community institutions that have been caring for the vulnerable are under attack because of economic forces, often unleashed by the processes of a globalized economy. On the other hand, new frameworks developed for that purpose are often the first casualties of economic crises and structural adjustment. This has to be looked into.

Fifth, we must involve the beneficiaries and civil society actors. Governments cannot meet social development goals alone. Their work will have to be complemented by the participation of civil society and the private sector. The best results can be achieved through effective partnerships between Government and civil society and networking by civil society actors. An equally important goal has to be to involve people and ensure that their voices count in social development.

Sixth, there is a need for strong State frameworks to act as enablers. There has been a notion that States should have a diminished role in social development. That does not imply that States should be diminished; rather, it is the opposite. We need strong States that can build effective partnerships with community and civil society organizations to facilitate social development. Democracy and governance issues are therefore of critical importance.

Seventh, the commitments made to accelerate the economic, social and human resources development of Africa and the least developed countries are yet to be fulfilled. These countries continue to be marginalized, and their participation in the globalized economy is diminishing.

The many promises made to Africa and the least developed countries have not been backed up by actions. Even the United Nations has cut back on technical cooperation provided to these countries. The 1995 Summit and the Geneva 2000 Conference have identified many pressing actions. We hope that this time around, these will be fulfilled. They should also be backed up by further actions at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 2001.

The eighth and final point concerns promoting international cooperation that matters. Without genuine international cooperation, social development goals will remain unfulfilled. Developing countries need resources and, also, the knowledge and capacity for their utilization. Therefore, they need international cooperation that not only makes available resources but also reduces the information gap, helps build capacity, promotes a fair trading regime, protects the resource base and generates employment and the well-being of the people.

Let me conclude by mentioning that the United Nations must strengthen its work in promoting social development goals. As we have mentioned before, social development should become one of the core

activities of the United Nations. All of the major United Nations global conferences of the 1990s — on food security, environment, human settlements, human rights, population and development, children and women — have highlighted the need for social development, figuring prominently in the work of the United Nations. As the goals of these conferences are interconnected and closely related, a coordinated and integrated follow-up to all of these conferences is essential for their realization. In this follow-up, it will be necessary that we continue to strengthen the effectiveness of the Economic and Social Council and its functional Commissions, in particular, the Commission for Social Development.

Mrs. Aragon (The Philippines): In late June of this year, we held a special session of the General Assembly dedicated entirely to the review of the commitments we made during the World Social Summit five years ago and of our subsequent actions to fulfil those commitments. Allow me at the outset to thank the Government of Switzerland for its generosity in hosting that special session, and likewise, to express our appreciation to Ambassador Cristián Maquieira of Chile, whose skill and leadership brought the special session to a successful conclusion.

It is heartening to note that during the Millennium Summit, our leaders reaffirmed the commitments and follow-up actions to which we all had agreed at the special session and that the subject of development for all peoples around the world figured prominently during the Millennium Summit round-table discussions.

In our review, we realized that, individually or collectively, much more needs to be done in order to bring about progress and prosperity to all peoples, particularly the 1.2 billion people living on less than one dollar a day, the more than one billion in the developing world who still lack access to safe drinking water and the more than the 2.4 billion who lack adequate sanitation, as well as the millions of children worldwide who are not in school. We also realized that the particular needs of the vulnerable, the disadvantaged and the marginalized in our societies will have to be addressed, and to do all this, resources are necessary if we are to achieve the social development goal that we set five years ago.

During our special session, we agreed to take steps to achieve many targets, with the hope that these would lead us closer to the realization of our goal. We agreed, among other things, that countries must exert every effort to halve by 2015 the proportion of the world's people living in poverty with an income below one dollar a day. And since more than half of these people are women and children, we stressed the need to offer measures that would increase the employment opportunities for women through training and education, as well as improve women's access to necessary resources, through, among other means, microcredit, in order to support small and medium-sized enterprises that they establish. We have to narrow the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005 and ensure that all children complete a full course of primary education by 2015. We agreed as well on further initiatives to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other debilitating diseases predominant in developing countries. We called on developed countries to fulfil their commitment of allotting 0.7 per cent of their gross national product (GNP) for official development assistance (ODA), a target that was set about 30 years ago, and we have drawn attention to the need for a firm response to the debt burden of highly indebted developing countries, as well as that of middle-income developing countries.

We believe that it is important to underscore and recall what we have agreed upon, so that we can be categorical and committed in our actions to achieve social development for all. For our part, the Philippines has made pro-poor strategies an integral part of our developmental plans. We aim to reduce poverty by adopting and implementing measures within the overall framework of human capital formation, by improving basic social services, by expanding microcredit and by empowering the poor. We have targeted a reduction in our own incidence of poverty from 31.8 per cent in 1997 to 25-28 per cent in 2004. We have taken to heart the goals and objectives we agreed to during the World Summit and the special session.

Let us not relegate these noble goals, commitments and further actions that we agreed to a few months ago to the archives of this Organization, where they will be appreciated only in thoughts and words. Let us instead translate them into concrete actions that will benefit all of humankind and give meaning to all our efforts. Let us act now, as our leaders have urged, so that five or 10 years hence, when we review the progress that we have achieved, we will look forward to doing more, not because we

have had little success in our efforts, but because we feel that we have been faithful to our commitments and are very close to achieving the goal of social development for all in a world that has been closely integrated by the unstoppable wave known as globalization.

The Philippines believes that the high-level intergovernmental event on financing for development to be held next year will be important, as it is expected to deliberate on actions aimed at contributing to the attainment of the goal of development for all. It is our hope that this event will seriously discuss the issue of resources, which must be done in order to carry out our plans and actions in addressing poverty and advancing progress and prosperity for all our people.

To conclude, if we have learned anything in our review of the Social Summit commitments, it is that the attainment of the goal of social development for all in this new millennium demands nothing less than the contribution and cooperation of all — of Governments, intergovernmental organizations and international organizations, as well as of non-governmental organizations. This goal is not unattainable if we not only put our hearts and minds into it, but also pour our resources into the task. This will make social development a reality for us all.

Mr. Knyazhinskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): As the Secretary-General's report accurately notes, the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, held last June, was the culmination of the comprehensive efforts of the international community to carry out the tasks laid out at the Copenhagen Social Development Summit in 1995. The wide-ranging discussion enabled us to learn lessons from the massive political and social upheavals that marked the twentieth century and to try to make joint efforts to set humanity on the road to stable and constructive development.

The conclusions drawn at the special session confirmed that the globalization process and the related radical changes in all areas of human life, far from ridding us of social scourges, in fact generate new risks and challenges. The threat of nuclear annihilation in the nuclear-confrontation period has now been replaced by such negative phenomena as international terrorism, organized crime, militant separatism, inter-ethnic conflict, illegal trafficking in weapons and narcotics and other severe problems.

Many countries have not been able to enjoy the benefits of progress in science and technology. Only a few developed States are enjoying a qualitatively new level of well-being thanks to this progress. During the twentieth century most of the other countries never achieved a new level of economic and social development.

We need to rebuild the contemporary architecture for international financial and economic cooperation, in order to bridge the gap between the extremes of poverty and wealth. In this context, the special session's decision that poverty eradication is the main social and economic development priority is particularly relevant.

Countries with economies in transition are facing unique problems. Their Governments are committed to overcoming the social costs of the transition process, to putting an end to want and abject poverty and to ensuring employment and social integration. However, these efforts have not yet received an appropriate response from the international community. For all practical purposes, the decisions of the Social Summit concerning support for these countries, including support from international financial institutions, have not been implemented. We are very satisfied that the outcome document of the special session contains specific initiatives to provide international assistance to countries with economies in transition. It is important that these Copenhagen + 5 decisions be translated into concrete actions.

The recent special session confirmed the decisive role of Governments in sustainable development aimed at satisfying the needs of the people and thus achieving greater equality and justice. The Russian Government, for its part, has undertaken the elaboration of a long-term national strategy that will create the prerequisites for effective economic and social development. The Russian Government sees its main task at present as being to ensure sustainable economic growth in an atmosphere of political stability and without reducing the population's standard of living. We now believe that the priority is not reform as such, but the people, in whose interest the reforms are being implemented.

The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, as well as the further initiatives for social development adopted by the Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session, give us important guidelines on

how to move towards a more beneficial and fairer world order.

Mr. Tiburcio (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We take the floor to acknowledge once again the efforts of the United Nations to bring the Member States together to reaffirm the commitments we made at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen and reaffirmed in Geneva. In this regard, the Mexican delegation supports the statement by the delegation of Colombia on behalf of the Rio Group countries. In addition, we would like to share with the Assembly the progress that the Mexican Government has made in its social policies and the goals that we have been able to achieve within the framework of the commitments entered into at the Social Development Summit, and to describe how we regard the challenges ahead.

Our country's social policy in the last six years has been aimed at achieving specific goals, such as those proposed in Copenhagen. Improving the welfare of our citizens has been the number one priority of President Zedillo's Administration. An important factor has been not only designing programmes and setting objectives, but also the way in which the expected results are attained.

We are convinced that the effectiveness of social policy, and particularly the fight against poverty, is linked to a favourable economic environment. Therefore, measures were taken to guarantee conditions of stability and growth that would ensure balanced development and allow for a vigorous campaign against poverty and marginalization.

Increasing resources have been devoted to social expenditures, which have risen by 7 per cent a year over the last six years. This year social expenditures represent more than 61 per cent of the proposed budget and 9.6 per cent of the gross national product, the highest rate achieved in Mexico's history. We have also achieved greater transparency in the allocation of resources, and promoted democratic decision-making in the struggle against poverty and social marginalization.

One strategy of our anti-poverty programmes has been to decentralize, devolving authority and resources to local governments. In order to guarantee the social rights of the citizens, we have developed — in addition to general health, education and social security programmes — a range of highly targeted food security, health and education programmes and created and improved housing services. Employment and income opportunities for the extremely poor have been increased through the use of microcredit and microfinancing.

Now I would like to highlight some of my country's achievements in education, health and employment. We have channelled significant funds to education, and consequently most Mexican children now have free access to basic education and graduation rates have been improved, so that now almost 90 per cent of all primary school children graduate. We have enlarged the health infrastructure significantly, and quality has been improved. This has reduced child mortality rates, and life expectancy has risen, now exceeding 75 years. The national health system now covers 98 per cent of the population of almost 100 million.

We have strengthened a forward-looking social policy that focuses on problems of investing in human capital. This allows people to advance on the basis of their own efforts. One example of this is our education, health and food programme, whose comprehensive approach has allowed us to cover 14 million people in rural areas, concentrating on families living in extreme poverty.

Similarly, the Mexican Government distributes milk every day to 4.2 million children and provides free tortillas to almost 6 million. Moreover, we distribute basic products at low cost to almost 30 million people living in conditions of marginalization. The national fund for social enterprises has created more than 638,000 jobs. More than 5.6 million jobs have been created through the seasonal employment programme and, with additional support activities, rural development has helped 3.5 million workers in the countryside. We have also decisively helped indigenous groups, women's organizations and artisans' groups with productive activities, to the benefit of over 2 million people. I would also refer to comprehensive actions that have benefited farm day labourers and other vulnerable groups.

The social policies of Mexico have made significant progress with respect to the commitments of the World Summit. Life expectancy has risen beyond 75 years. Average schooling has risen to 7.8 grades. Illiteracy has been reduced to 10 per cent. The mortality rate of children under five has been reduced

to 28 per 1,000 and we have significantly lowered unemployment in urban areas.

The responsible participation of society has had a clear impact on these activities. Citizen response is reflected in the work of non-governmental organizations and in the establishment of citizens' advisory boards on social matters. Gender equity has also been an important goal of our social policy. In general, various poverty eradication programmes devote 50 per cent of their resources to the specific needs of women.

Despite the joint efforts of society and Government, the extent and depth of poverty continue to be key challenges. Meeting them will require an even greater effort on the part of all Mexicans. This political, ethical and moral commitment to the poorest requires us to build on our successes and to remedy our shortcomings. To that end, our actions should be based on a broad democratic plurality to fight against poverty and to build a fair country, such as that which earlier generations have always tried to build.

The commitments we undertook in Copenhagen and reaffirmed in Geneva compel all countries to take more vigorous action to help the poor. We share the objective of halving the incidence of extreme poverty by 2015. This is a conscious commitment undertaken as a result of the review and assessment of accomplishments made since the Copenhagen Summit in a world experiencing intense globalization. These and other challenges must be met with significant efforts in the years ahead, nationally, regionally and within the framework of the United Nations.

The Government of Mexico fully supports the new measures and initiatives set forth in Geneva to fulfil the commitments of the Summit. We know that, by promoting social and economic policies within the framework of democracy and the full exercise of citizens' rights, we will make progress towards eradicating the poverty and inequity that persist in our countries. There is no doubt that we can make a contribution to all humanity at the dawn of the new millennium by focusing the energies of the international community on meeting these formidable challenges.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Botswana on behalf of the States members of the Southern African Development Community.

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's report before us on the theme "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world", contained in document A/55/344. The report succinctly analyses the outcome of the review conference held last June in Geneva on the Copenhagen Programme of Action endorsed during the World Summit for Social Development in 1995.

That conference adopted the outcome document, entitled "Further initiatives for social development", which marked a renewed and strengthened commitment of the international community to eradicating poverty, promoting full and productive employment and fostering social integration to achieve stable, safe and just societies for all. The report further identifies a number of critical measures necessary to achieve the Summit's goals.

At the national level, due to the introduction of the market economy, the capacity of States to provide social services has been considerably reduced. Even though the State is no longer the sole provider of social services, there is consensus on the need to strengthen the public institutions to provide an effective framework to ensure an equitable provision of basic social services for all. Furthermore, for an effective implementation of the goals, each State must have a clear strategy for social development, focusing on capacity-building and giving priority to investments in education, health and employment and to the provision of other basic social services in order to help people living in poverty.

Scarcity of resources, weak infrastructure, worsening terms of trade and the debt burden are among the factors undermining poverty eradication efforts in developing countries. Other obstacles to poverty eradication include lack of access to education, health services and safe drinking water. International support is therefore important in supporting the efforts of developing countries in the aforementioned areas.

Permit me at this juncture to share the experiences of my country in addressing issues of social development. Since independence, Tanzania has formulated policies to promote social development in all its aspects. However, the programmes could not be

sustained over a long period of time due to lack of resources.

After the 1995 Copenhagen Social Summit, Tanzania adopted a poverty-eradication strategy for economic and social development. Once again, mobilizing sufficient domestic resources for poverty eradication continues to be a major problem. Having endorsed the 20/20 initiative, the Tanzanian Government began to allocate more budgetary resources to the basic social sectors in order to improve the situation. However, counterpart financing by donors was not provided on a regular basis and official development assistance resources have declined.

Progress towards the implementation of the Social Summit goals has also been limited by the debt burden. For a long time, the unbearable debt servicing has been draining over 30 per cent of government revenue. In this regard, we are relieved to have qualified for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative funding and hope to use the relief funds for social development.

As you are aware, Tanzania hosts over 800,000 refugees from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere. The presence of such a large refugee population is a big burden for a poor country like Tanzania. This implies that while striving to meet the basic social needs of our people, we also have to bear the additional burden of meeting the growing needs of the refugees in many aspects that are not covered by the international community. It is therefore imperative that there must be increased and sustained assistance that will not only meet the needs of the refugees, but also those of the host country. Concerted effort is also needed to resolve the conflicts in the Great Lakes region, which are the main cause of the refugee problem.

The emergence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic has also brought a number of setbacks through, among other things, the weakening and depletion of a much-needed human resource base. The situation is grave. We request the international community to support efforts aimed at preventing the disease and at facilitating access to treatment and care for the victims. Support is also needed in helping the Government's efforts to address other dangerous diseases affecting our population, including malaria and tuberculosis.

In conclusion, Tanzania has put in place a national strategy for poverty eradication. We are appreciative of the growing support we are receiving, both bilaterally and from the international community. We are convinced that the benefits resulting from our access to HIPC will greatly facilitate our poverty eradication programmes.

Mr. Carp (United States): The World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995 made important gains in reshaping both national and international development policies, institutions and resources to promote more equitable and people-centred sustainable development. The Summit highlighted how investments in people — in their education and health — were critical to their productivity. It focused positively on the role of multilateral banks, structural adjustment programmes and the power of free markets in reducing poverty and promoting social integration. It broke new ground with a specific commitment to equality for women and recognized the need to equalize opportunities so that people with disabilities can contribute to society and benefit from full participation in it.

In June 2000, the international community came together to assess the progress made since Copenhagen — to take stock of what had been accomplished to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration to achieve stable, safe and just societies for all. We looked at the obstacles encountered during the last five years in the implementation of the Copenhagen Programme of Action and discussed further initiatives to accelerate social development for all.

As we surveyed the endeavours undertaken to achieve the Copenhagen Programme of Action, we all soon realized that even though significant positive development could be identified, barriers remained. The focus then turned to additional steps that needed to be taken to further implement the goals and commitments made in Copenhagen.

I am sure that we can all agree that negotiations were not always easy. However, while we encountered bumps along the way, the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, entitled "World Summit for Social Development and Beyond: Achieving Social Development for All in a Globalizing World", which came to be known as Copenhagen + 5, reaffirmed the ten commitments made five years ago to promote social development at the national and international

levels and pledged further initiatives to implement those commitments in the years ahead.

The documents negotiated at Copenhagen + 5 contained much useful language on workers' rights, social integration, health and education, the battle against HIV/AIDS, gender equality, people-centred sustainable development, transparent and accountable governance, measures to combat corruption and poverty eradication.

While we believe that economic policies cannot be divorced from the social and political context in which they function, we firmly believe that good governance is a critical element for an enabling environment for social development. The United States has been supportive of the trend in the international community, as well as within multilateral lending agencies, to take into account social impact when formulating and implementing structural adjustment programmes. At the same time, we believe that free and regular elections, the rule of law, transparency in political processes, accountable governments and an independent and free media are basic building blocks of a stable society.

The United States remains committed to the goals of the Social Summit, and we have endeavoured to raise the living standards of American citizens. We have worked towards the creation of a more equitable social system with attention to the concerns of minorities, women, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities. We have increased the minimum wage and have undertaken health insurance reform to benefit working individuals and families.

However, as our Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala, said at the time of the special session, there is still much work to do. Secretary Shalala noted then that the United States must enforce laws against racial and sex discrimination, expand health care, support worker training, invest in our most impoverished regions and improve education. We are working very hard to put our own house in order.

We commend every nation for everything that has been accomplished since 1995. However, we must all continue to work hard to implement the commitments made in Copenhagen. We believe that there is need to give special attention to the valuable role that women can play in social development, as well as in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. But, even though women have a critical impact on the development of societies, they are often excluded from the economic and social process. The opportunity to include women as beneficiaries of services and partners to their delivery has never been fully realized. There is need, therefore, to empower women politically and economically, and women must participate at all levels of decision-making. The first step is through education.

There has been an increased awareness within the international community that education is one of the most valuable means of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. But gender discrimination and bias still exist. There is still persistent use of gender stereotypes in educational materials, and insufficient attention is paid to the link between women's enrolment in higher educational institutions and labour market dynamics. Achieving gender equality and empowerment of women requires redressing inequalities between women and men and girls and boys and ensuring their equal rights, responsibilities, opportunities and possibilities.

The United States strongly supported language in the Copenhagen + 5 and Beijing + 5 outcome documents calling for accelerated action and strengthened political commitment to close the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005, and to ensure free compulsory and universal primary education for both girls and boys by 2015. We simply must continue to work together to develop to the fullest the potential of women in our societies.

This brings me to the topic of globalization. We must acknowledge that globalization is a fact, not a policy option that can be turned off or reversed. Globalization is revolutionizing the way the world works, and can bring tremendous benefits to developing countries — by stimulating trade, for example, or by adapting new information technology to local uses, such as micro e-commerce, distance education and public health information. At the same time, we recognize that not all developing countries have been able to take advantage of the benefits of globalization to the same degree. Within countries, not all groups share in the benefit. Due to historic patterns of discrimination, some vulnerable groups, including women, do not have equal access to these benefits, or the proper education and training that will enable them to participate fully in the positive aspects of the new economy. Every nation needs to pursue sound policies, such as promoting education, private sector development and the free flow of information to help

all their citizens, including women, to take advantage of the opportunities of economic globalization.

At the same time, we strongly believe that developing nations should not face this task alone. Developing countries need help to close the gaps so that they can successfully harness the benefits of globalization for economic development. As we agreed in Okinawa, the international community must work together with developing countries in areas such as trade capacity-building, debt relief, expanding digital opportunities and untying official development assistance. Further, the international community must also help developing countries build policies and institutions that foster freedom, opportunity, security, the rule of law and more effective delivery of education and health services, as well as environmentally sustainable management of natural resources.

In the area of trade, the Trade and Development Act of 2000, passed by the United States Congress this spring, combines the Administration's African Growth and Opportunity Act and the Caribbean Basin Trade Enhancement Act into an economic package which offers duty-free and quota-free access to the United States market for eligible countries. The initiative also offers broad economic and technical assistance to promote development in those regions.

We have been working as well with the European Union and Japan to ensure that developing countries benefit more fully from participation in the global trading system. Recently the United States and the European Union concluded proposals offering duty-free market access to virtually all exports from least developed countries. We are also working with the European Union and Japan to provide technical assistance to help the least developed countries participate more fully in the world trading system and meet their World Trade Organization (WTO) obligations.

With regard to debt relief, the United States reaffirms its strong commitment to achieving further progress in delivering debt relief to the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) committed to poverty reduction. There has been progress in the implementation of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. Ten countries have reached their decision points and are now receiving substantial cash flow relief. By the end of 2000 as many as 20 are expected to reach their decision points and begin receiving debt relief.

We need to emphasize the importance of country-owned poverty reduction strategy papers, which are a vital way of ensuring that the proceeds of debt relief and development lead to poverty reduction and economic growth. We encourage the countries which have not yet reached their decision point to continue reform efforts in order to benefit from the Enhanced HIPC Initiative.

Before closing, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that our Congress has agreed to appropriate $435 million, the full amount needed to fund our share of the HIPC trust fund and to pay for our bilateral debt reduction commitments.

We need to work together and continue our efforts to improve the quality of life of our citizens as we enter the new millennium. We are prepared to work with the international community to ensure that our children can grow in a safe, healthy and prosperous environment.

Mr. Parnohadiningrat (Indonesia): On behalf of the Indonesian delegation, I am pleased to speak on agenda item 37, "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the special session of the General Assembly in this regard".

Allow me to begin by expressing my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his informative report.

The recent twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly has added to our awareness of the much analysed impact of globalization and the far-reaching ramifications that accompany this phenomenon. For the majority of developing countries, its direct impact, namely the weakening of the capacity of national Governments and local communities to control and manage global influences, has become even more well known.

At the same time, the rapid pace of development in information technology and electronic commerce has added a new element to the equation. The Asian economic crisis clearly demonstrated the speed at which finances now flow from one region of the world to another and the need to adjust to the impact of information and communication technology on the globalization of financial markets. The recent special session of the General Assembly entitled "World

Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world" was therefore a very timely event, as it facilitated deliberations on these emerging and interrelated issues that so clearly affect social development.

Among the many important issues addressed, one that my delegation considers to be extremely crucial, is the eradication of poverty. In this connection, the observations made at the Summit that many countries are experiencing an increase in poverty and a decrease in basic social services is worth reconsidering. Indonesia is confronted with a prolonged economic crisis. Coupled with it are a number of issues, such as demographic changes and their attendant consequences, the question of internally displaced persons and refugees and the lack of resources for the provision of basic social services, all stand in the way of eradicating poverty. Therefore, we fully support new initiatives, among others, consensus-building among relevant actors at all levels on policies and strategies to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by one half by 2015.

The debt-burden issue of developing countries has also been prominent on the list of obstacles to be followed up since the Summit and again the special session registered progress on this question. There are several welcome initiatives that have emerged from the special session, including contributions to the heavily indebted poor countries trust fund and even the cancellation of debt by some countries and, the perennial issue of the decline in official development assistance, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, was also addressed through reaffirmation of the 0.7 per cent target.

We also need to take note of the valuable contributions being made by the regional commissions in support of regional social development initiatives. Indonesia therefore supports the notion that regional commissions should continue to convene high-level follow-up meetings. Such meetings would afford an opportunity to share experiences and discuss best practices to review progress made and to identify additional initiatives to strengthen implementation, as well as to enhance cooperation within the region.

Without income and decent employment, the total development target cannot be achieved. It is for this reason that we endorse the promotion of decent employment opportunities based on four social pillars, which include securing basic rights at work, ensuring equality between women and men in employment and occupations, enhancing the effectiveness of social protection for all and strengthening tripartism in social dialogue. To that end, Indonesia promotes the implementation of the eight core conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which it has ratified. With regard to the feminization of poverty, Indonesia welcomes the increased attention being given by the ILO to the protection of human rights of women migrant workers working in the domestic sector and appeals for increased ILO technical assistance in this field.

On this occasion, we also wish to express our deep regret regarding the decline in cooperation assistance on the part of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the welfare of women and children in Indonesia, for the period from 2001 to 2005. Such a decline will weaken the national capacity to meet the basic needs of Indonesian mothers and children, as well as their ability to cope with the negative impact of the economic crisis.

In closing, let me state that Indonesia will remain an active and fervent supporter of social development for all. We hope that the international community will move beyond rhetoric and achieve social development goals set at the World Summit.

Mr. Mbanefo (Nigeria): It is my honour and privilege to address the Assembly on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, on agenda item 37, on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the special session of the General Assembly in this regard. May I also express the Group's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his concise report on the subject, which is a very handy reference for the issues related to social development.

Last June some 163 representatives of Government addressed the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly in Geneva on the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. That solemn occasion provided the international community the opportunity to reassess the extent to which it had met the goals set in five years previously. The score card was not encouraging. In the course of deliberations, many representatives acknowledged that, despite the positive developments in economic and social spheres, the gap between the

developed and the developing countries in terms of wealth distribution has continued to widen during the last five years.

A number of obstacles were identified as being responsible for the lack of progress since Copenhagen, which, inter alia, included the challenges of globalization and declining levels of official development assistance. These challenges are considered beyond the capacity of any single country to address. Enhanced international cooperation is imperative if these issues are to be successfully addressed.

The special session took far-reaching decisions considered critical for the achievement of social development for all. For us in developing countries, reducing the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by half by 2015, a commitment which our leaders also entered into at the Millennium Summit, and developing and implementing pro-poor growth strategies will require resources that are not readily available in most of our countries. The resource bases of our weak economies need to be improved as a matter of urgency. We welcome initiatives aimed at the improvement of access to the global trading system, the reduction of the negative social impact of international financial turbulence and the enhancement of the participation of developing countries in international economic decision-making processes, among others. However, there is also an urgent need for unhindered and unrestricted market access for exports from developing countries. We believe that this is a sure way to enable our active participation in the global market, which will enhance growth, create employment and eventually reduce poverty.

We commend the initiative of a few of our development partners that have undertaken to contribute to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Trust Fund and to enact legislation to write off loans they made to some developing countries. Similarly, we wish to convey our gratitude to the countries that have announced their decision to raise their official development assistance to 1 per cent of their gross domestic product. In the same vein, another country pledged a contribution of close to $175 million for development projects in education and in combating HIV/AIDS. The Group of 77 welcomes these exemplary initiatives and urges more of our partners to follow this example.

External debt is a recurrent theme that requires urgent attention. The debt service ratio remains extremely high, making it virtually impossible to mobilize local resources to propel social renewal and poverty eradication. Debt has become the greatest obstacle in tackling underemployment and unemployment in our countries. Continuing the existing debt policies of international financial institutions can only make our countries poorer. Although we welcome the new initiatives that I have enumerated, it is also our firm belief that the debt issue has to be addressed in a more coherent and comprehensive manner to achieve the desired objective. That will ultimately have to include outright debt cancellation to free the scarce resources that will provide the basis for economic renewal and social advancement.

Sub-Saharan Africa has the largest proportion of people living on less than $1 a day. It also contains the countries that recorded the slowest growth among medium-income and low-income countries in the 1990s, with total outstanding external debt exceeding the entire gross national product. The initiatives taken by the special session to address the need for additional concessional resources for Africa and the least developed countries and to consider the establishment of a world solidarity fund are steps in the right direction.

Nowhere is the impact of HIV/AIDS more devastating than in Africa. According to a recent report, 14 million Africans have died of the disease, and another 24.5 million are now living with HIV. Undoubtedly, the challenges posed by the HIV pandemic require a coordinated global response. We believe that the initiatives of African countries deserve the support of the international community. It is in that regard that we welcome the measures addressed by the special session, particularly the call for wider access to quality medications by ensuring the provision, affordability, distribution and delivery of drugs, as well as putting in place a strong generic drug policy and allocating additional resources to support research, development and training in Africa and the least developed countries in the field of vaccines and public health.

Education is the key to the technology-driven global economy. It can provide developing countries the opportunity to overcome the obstacles that impede reaching general social development objectives.

Consequently, it is imperative that developing countries continue to devote all necessary attention to education, especially basic education. We therefore welcome the reaffirmation by the special session of the Framework for Action: Education for All adopted at the World Education Forum in Dakar, as well as the call to encourage and assist developing countries in building capacities for secondary and tertiary education and in skills and technologies. We also welcome the reaffirmation by world leaders in the Millennium Declaration that no effort will be spared to free humanity from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty that substantial numbers of the world's peoples have been confined to.

The twenty-fourth special session remains a watershed in meeting the goals and objectives that the international community set for itself five years ago, which we all agree have not been adequately addressed. On the basis of the lessons learned during that period, the countries of the Group of 77 believe that much needs to be achieved in the next five years if we are seriously committed to the eradication of poverty and improving the quality of life for the world's peoples. We therefore affirm our commitment to play our part in meeting the objectives of achieving social development for all. To that end, we reiterate our call for the provision of adequate resources, at all levels, so that the various commitments made during the special session can be translated into concrete action.

Mr. Ogonowski (Poland): I wish first to point out that Poland associated itself with the statement made earlier today on this agenda item by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union and associated countries.

Five years have passed since the world's heads of State and Government met in Copenhagen to decide on common action to address social problems on a global scale. The Copenhagen Summit recognized, and the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session confirmed, that poverty, unemployment, discrimination and social exclusion have a universal character and that every society has to address them. The international community should therefore unite its efforts to better cope with those phenomena and eradicate them. The review and appraisal of the implementation since 1995 of the Copenhagen commitments has shown that while progress has been made, it has been uneven and that further initiatives in that respect are required.

The documents adopted in Copenhagen and Geneva underline the importance of cooperation, joint responsibility and international solidarity in solving problems related to social development. They also inspire and stimulate social sensitivity, but at the same time reflect the concrete commitment of the international community. The debate during the special session, Copenhagen + 5, clearly demonstrated that globalization creates new possibilities for economic and social growth, but that at the same time it can also be disruptive to some weaker and less developed economies. A particularly distressing tendency is that the poorest countries and social groups do not in practice share the benefits derived from increased economic and trade cooperation.

The Government of Poland reaffirms its unequivocal support for the objectives of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action, as well as for the outcome document of the twenty-fourth special session. To illustrate our national commitment to these important social development targets, let me briefly mention the actions taken by the Polish Government, and point out the positive experience gained in the process of achieving the goals set by the Copenhagen Summit.

The targets identified in Copenhagen helped the Polish Government to make more efficient its efforts focused on poverty reduction, promotion of productive employment and social integration. In order to attain better and more easily accessible social services, the Polish Government introduced in 1999 four major structural reforms in the sectors of administration, social insurance, health care and education.

Reduction of poverty and of social exclusion have been identified as priorities of the Government's social policy. In that regard, the Government encourages civil-society actors, such as non-governmental organizations, local authorities and the private sector, to coordinate their efforts in order to increase their efficiency in addressing those challenges.

On the international level, the Government of Poland welcomed the decision of the G-7 countries taken at Cologne in 1999 to enhance the debt relief initiative with regard to highly indebted poor countries. Poland has accepted the principles of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative and has decided to participate actively in the debt reduction process. As it completes the process of transition to a

market-based economy, Poland is still confronted with many social and economic challenges. Joining the HIPC Initiative to demonstrate solidarity with the poorest countries is a significant effort on our part, which will amount to $240 million.

In 1998 Poland became an emerging donor to United Nations agencies. The Government of Poland has approved the plans and principles for a national development assistance agency, which is now in the process of being established. The main task of that institution will be to coordinate the distribution of Polish development assistance.

For its part, Poland is resolved to continue the formulation of its social development policy and to expand cooperation with all interested international partners for the full implementation of the Copenhagen commitments.

Ms. Elisha (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I wish to begin by associating my delegation with the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Five years ago, in the face of inadequate development and its adverse consequences, such as poverty, illiteracy, disease and conflict, the international community decided to address the question of social development by convening the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development. Then, last June at Geneva, the General Assembly assessed the progress in poverty eradication since Copenhagen. And the Millennium Summit, held in September 2000, once again highlighted the central problem of poverty as the key challenge facing the developing countries, particularly those in Africa.

At those gatherings, North and South agreed about the need to eradicate poverty. Now we must identify concrete actions to attain that objective. It is urgent that both developing and industrialized countries begin to implement their commitments to tackle the root causes of poverty.

It is important to mention the report submitted by the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to the OECD 2000 Forum, held at Paris. The report set out seven interdependent development objectives that would improve the lives of millions of people were they to be attained by 2015. These were: to reduce by half the number of people living on less than a dollar a day; to provide primary education to all children; to build the capacity of women by eliminating the gender gap in education; to reduce infant and child mortality and morbidity; to reduce maternal mortality; to promote access to reproductive health services; and to promote sustainable environmental development.

The delegation of Benin welcomes those decisions and calls for accelerating the process of implementing them.

Those same economic development forums also stressed debt reduction and debt cancellation, something on which the industrialized countries are already at work. We earnestly believe that rescheduling or cancellation of debt would ease the situation of countries experiencing difficulties. But this would by no means solve all their problems — far from it. Given the present state of international economic relations, if debt were deferred today, the cycle of debt would resume tomorrow and would continue to hold the economies of countries in difficulty hostage. It is therefore important to reform and improve the international economic system so as to freeze the debt and eliminate debt-servicing costs.

Moreover, economic reforms alone cannot revive the economies of the least developed countries. Beyond goodwill, we also need generosity from our partners, because economic, social and cultural development require substantial investment if they are to be swift and lasting.

Benin is pursuing economic reform in the context of a strategy to reduce poverty and promote growth; this is a new way of describing enhanced structural adjustment. According to the International Monetary Fund, our growth rate has stabilized at approximately 5 per cent with a trend towards improvement; if reforms are properly carried out, we could enter a period of strong, sustained growth and of a reduction in poverty. But we remain concerned, because we do not have the right to fail: the consequences would be too costly and too unfortunate.

I stress these aspects of development because my country is pursuing all economic reforms with conviction with a view to reducing poverty; we expect results that can quickly help ease the difficulties our population is facing. Only economic development can generate sustainable social development. We believe in development that encompasses and preserves a

people's social and cultural values, through which it will be possible to attain lasting, self-generated and self-reliant development.

For all those reasons, my delegation once again appeals to our development partners to make it possible for developing and industrialized countries to work together on the best strategies to bring about a better future for all peoples: a future based on peace, dignity and prosperity.

Mr. Thakur (Nepal): At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to place on record our great appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and the special session of the General Assembly. The report provides us with a clear picture of the progress made in the area of global development, as seen from the social perspective, and of the challenges facing the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

The decade of the 1990s has been a period of starkly contrasting tendencies. On the one hand, it has been a period of unprecedented changes, marked by the end of the cold war; growing economic globalization and interdependence; greater flows of capital, goods and services; and widespread dissemination of ideas through a revolution in communications. On the other hand, the social and economic situation in a number of countries, particularly in the least-developed and landlocked ones, has further deteriorated. As economic openness and liberalization were becoming buzzwords, most developing countries embarked on painful reforms, which often reduced the control of the Governments over their economies and exposed them to the volatility of international markets. The much expected peace dividend did not materialize, and, in an increasingly globalized world, developing countries lost control of what they had without having the opportunity to partake of what was emerging beyond their control.

The result has been a widening gap between the rich and poor, within and among nations, growing poverty in poor countries, intensifying competition among a growing number of people for declining resources, increasing conflicts, increasing social and economic dislocation of people and environmental degradation.

In this context, my delegation is highly encouraged by the successful conclusion of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, held in Geneva earlier this year. The special session, in which representatives from more than 190 countries and non-governmental organization participated, marked a renewed and strengthened commitment by the international community to eradicating poverty, promulgating full and productive employment and fostering social integration to achieve stable, safe and just societies for all. The special session also acknowledged in good faith that the progress made in a few areas of social development — such as education, health and access to basic services — is not enough to meet the special needs of the majority of people living in poverty.

We appreciate all the new initiatives incorporated in the outcome document of the special session, particularly the initiative to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by one half by the year 2015. We believe that since poverty eradication is the most fundamental means of achieving social development, it should be regarded as a matter of urgency. In this regard, we appreciate the sentiments of the Millennium Summit. In its current ninth plan Nepal has adopted poverty alleviation as its main objective, so as to eradicate absolute poverty within 20 years.

We fully endorse the initiatives aimed at promoting full employment that were adopted by the Copenhagen Summit as well as by the special session. Without productive employment, poverty cannot be eradicated, nor can justice be promoted in societies. Therefore, to reduce poverty and promote employment, Nepal has focused on a number of specific programmes, such as microcredit for the poor, *Bisheshwar Afno Gaon Afai Banaun*, which means build your village yourself. We believe that strengthening the social-integration capabilities of relevant United Nations bodies will be the most effective way to promote social integration.

It would be impossible to promote social integration without promoting education, health and other social investments. Besides, people of all faith and origins should feel included through participating in the political system and in people-centred development that promotes social justice. Nepal has therefore encouraged multi-party democracy, good governance and human rights as the core values in the nation-building process.

My delegation is deeply concerned with the declining level of official development assistance (ODA). In this regard, we appreciate that during the special session some developed countries reaffirmed their commitment to meet the ODA target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product. A large chunk of resources in developing countries is eaten up by debt servicing and repayment, which further vitiate the capacity of these countries to invest in development. We appreciate the announcement by some of our development partners that they will enact laws to write-off loans to developing countries and cancel the interest. In this context, we also welcome the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative and urge our development partners to widen and deepen the Initiative so that all highly indebted poor countries, particularly the least-developed countries, can benefit from it.

Developing countries cannot embark on sustained growth and sustainable development without access for their products and services to the developed countries' markets or to technology in rich countries. We therefore sincerely urge our development partners to provide such access more liberally to developing countries. The products and services of least developed countries, because of their special development difficulties, will need duty-free and quota-free access to rich-country markets if they are to rise out of poverty and join the global economic mainstream.

Mrs. Barghouti (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to speak, on behalf of my delegation, on agenda item 37, "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the special session of the General Assembly in this regard". This is a very important issue to which we all must pay particular attention, and on which we must ensure proper follow-up. Today, the world faces strategic and existential problems, and collective international efforts are needed to find appropriate solutions.

The World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen in 1995, addressed issues that are central to people's lives, in particular the eradication of poverty, the elimination of unemployment, the promotion of social integration, the promotion of and respect for human rights, and the creation of a suitable environment for social development with a view to the establishment of a better society marked by justice, democracy and well-being.

The twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly was held in June to assess achievements and obstacles and to ensure that the best possible action was taken to implement the objectives of the Summit. Developments following the Copenhagen Summit have shown that the situation in the world did not improve in accordance with the expectations expressed at the Summit.

Most of the objectives of the Copenhagen Programme for Action have still not been implemented. Statistics show that poverty has quintupled since the Summit, that unemployment has dramatically increased and that social integration has suffered a setback in many countries because of the increased incidence of armed violence, foreign occupation and nationalistic, ethnic and religious strife, as well as the marginalization or complete absence of democracy.

My country, occupied Palestine, is in a grave situation and is experiencing, on a daily basis, deterioration in all areas, particularly in the economic and social fields. In addition to their daily suffering as a result of continuing Israeli occupation and the oppressive practices and policies of Israel, the Palestinian people have been facing since 28 September 2000 a tragic situation threatening their lives, their entity and their economic and social institutions. Israel, the occupying Power, is waging a bloody war of oppression, using every deadly weapon against Palestinian civilians throughout occupied Palestine, including Jerusalem. This barbaric aggression, which has been taking place since 28 September, has resulted in the martyrdom of more than 140 people and has injured more than 3,500, many of whom are still in critical condition, in addition to causing great material and moral loss.

Israel is waging a fierce, bloody war against Palestinian civilians merely because they are demonstrating and protesting against the oppression, the occupation and flagrant acts of aggression directed at the holy sites, the attempts to judaize the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the severe restrictions on the freedom of movement of persons and goods, the closure of international crossing points and the besieging of many towns, villages and other places. Given this painful situation and the difficult and complicated political and economic environment for the Palestinian people, with its negative social effects, almost one quarter of the Palestinian people are living below the poverty line, and employment is higher than 12 per cent.

Furthermore, economic growth indicators are weak because there is no investment owing to the lack of security, the struggling peace process and economic dependence on the Israeli economy.

All these factors have cast a heavy shadow on the development process in Palestine and hindered the effective implementation of all the economic and social policies and other legislation drafted by the Palestinian National Authority. By continuing to occupy Palestinian land, Israel is hampering social integration among the Palestinian people through its policy of creating bantustan-like areas, of isolation and of continuing to build and expand illegitimate colonial settlements. Furthermore, Israel rejects the right of Palestinian refugees to return and the right to compensation in accordance with General Assembly resolutions, in particular resolution 194 (III), and it refuses to allow the return of displaced persons.

We believe that there can be no real development under occupation. The key condition for genuine social development in Palestine is the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination, the establishment of their own independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, the return of refugees and the implementation of all relevant international legally-binding resolutions. Greater support is also required from the international community for the Palestinian people in their just struggle; and the United Nations must continue to shoulder its responsibilities in full until peace, security, freedom and justice are obtained for the Palestinians and all peoples of the region.

The President: In accordance with the decision taken at the 45th plenary meeting this morning, I now call on the Observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Martino (Holy See): Among all the recent summits and international conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations, the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development was unique because it addressed the question of social development in a holistic way, focusing on the centrality of human beings in the development process. The Summit attempted to address the material and spiritual needs of individuals, their families and the communities in which they live throughout our diverse countries and regions. The Summit participants committed themselves to a political, economic, ethical and spiritual vision that is based on human dignity, human rights, equality, respect, peace, democracy, mutual responsibility and cooperation and full respect for the various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of people. The Summit recognized the interdependence of economic development, social development and environmental protection for the progress of humankind and the integrity of all of creation.

This was a broad vision of integral development, embracing the human person in his or her entirety. The Copenhagen Summit attempted to translate such a vision into concrete and attainable commitments, especially concerning the fight against poverty and exclusion, access to better education and health care for all and fostering work for all in a dignified framework.

The targets set out at the Copenhagen Summit have since been taken up in various contexts within the community of nations to become points of reference for progress in the area of social development. They can become the basic elements in the political programmes of all countries, both rich and poor, recognizing, however that social development cannot be achieved without the collective commitment and efforts of the international community. Development requires the common effort of both individual nations and the community of nations, within a framework of solidarity.

These basic commitments of Copenhagen were once more repeated, and their value reaffirmed, during the recent special session of the General Assembly on achieving social development for all in a globalizing world. Many of them were again taken up by the world's leaders at the Millennium Summit.

The special session offered the opportunity to examine progress made so far. Now we must look towards the future. The citizens of the world want to see results. They want to see the commitments translated into reality. There is no room for complacency or hesitancy. The world community has a duty to all those living in poverty today, as well as to future generations, to ensure that this new century is one of concrete actions in solidarity. The world of the new century, far from being one of exclusion and marginalization, must become one in which all human persons can fully realize their personal God-given potential. The world of the new century, far from being one of exploitation, must be one in which persons,

families and communities can live in dignity and security.

The Copenhagen Summit recognized the importance of economic development, and in particular the role of dynamic, open and free markets. But it also recognized that the market alone is insufficient to adequately harmonize economic and social development. Government is needed to ensure that the market operates within an appropriate ethical and juridical framework. Government is needed to foster stability and equity and to create an environment in which economic initiative and freedom are accompanied by measures of social protection for the weakest.

The Copenhagen Summit stressed the fact that work plays a central role in any programme for social development. Employment policies can never be separated from the subject of work, which is the human person. Work can never be reduced to being considered as merely merchandise or to being just another factor to be examined in estimating the comparative cost advantage or disadvantage of an economic project. Pope John Paul II has stressed both the human and the social dimension of work and its significance for people today.

"Work is a good thing for man",

he said in paragraph 40 of his encyclical letter, *Laborem Exercens*,

> "... because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfilment as a human being and indeed in a sense becomes 'more a human being'."

In recent years renewed attention has been given, especially through the International Labour Organization (ILO), to labour standards, to the conditions in which human work takes place. The Holy See supports the efforts being made to ensure greater protection of the rights of workers worldwide, to improve working conditions and to eliminate rapidly the worst forms of child labour.

The concept of working conditions also includes the need to ensure adequate measures of social protection, to protect workers and their families in times of illness or unemployment, or from external shocks. Much more must be done in all parts of the world to foster safety in the workplace and to ensure protection of the health of individual workers, as well as broad environmental protection.

The concept of "decent work" has been developed by the International Labour Organization in order to focus attention on the human and social dimensions of work, including the aspirations of workers for the good of their families. Pope John Paul II has particularly stressed the relationship between work and the family. The family is both a school and a living experience of what it is to be fully a human person, and it is the natural place in which human values, such as industriousness and solidarity, are learned.

A major challenge of the community of nations, and of the various social partners within society, is to identify models of development which create productive employment and which permit men and women to bring the contribution of their efforts to the good of society through work. Employment policy must focus on jobs which offer enrichment of the quality of the lives of workers and their families. Economic and social development must enable all persons to realize their potential. The poverty agenda and the employment agenda of the Copenhagen Summit belong together. The fight against poverty must never result in new forms of dependency, but should be one in which investment in the capacity of persons results in making them able to realize human capacities through work, including work which is socially beneficial.

Long-term unemployment and youth unemployment remain great social development challenges. The Holy See hopes that all the United Nations agencies, including the international financial institutions, as well as the business community, will address this issue in a concerted manner in the coming years.

Work is the key to social progress. Access to productive employment is part of the key to establishing truly participative communities in which adults can realize their deepest aspirations for themselves and their families.

The President: In accordance with the decision taken at the forty-fifth plenary meeting this morning, I call on the observer of Switzerland.

Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland) *(spoke in French)*: When Switzerland invited the General Assembly to hold its twenty-fourth special session on the follow-up

to the World Summit for Social Development, in Geneva, its objective was to promote a dialogue between international organizations, Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). There were two main aspects to that objective, the one organizational and the other political.

On the organizational side, especially with regard to the provision of a platform for dialogue, Switzerland is happy to have had the privilege of enjoying exemplary, very constructive cooperation with the United Nations Secretary-General and with all the delegations of Member States. We wanted to try to renew the dialogue between all actors of society on the social dimension of globalization, a dialogue which had been compromised by events in other international organizations or conferences. The special session in Geneva took place in a good climate of discussion between Governments and with the other civil society actors, especially the NGOs, social partners and economic circles.

Negotiations between States on the substance at the special session took place in what was sometimes a difficult environment regarding the major issues of principle. However, the exchange of creative ideas also took place as part of certain events organized on the periphery of the General Assembly. These events included the non-governmental organization forum and the international symposium devoted to partnerships in a globalized world. Further, the discussions made it possible to engage civil society in a constructive dialogue and to avoid any violent demonstrations during Geneva 2000.

As for the political element, we were trying to launch a multilateral initiative to promote synergies and cooperation among international organizations dealing with social aspects of globalization. From the very beginning we wanted a dialogue to take place between the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the International Labour Organization and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, on the one hand, and Governments and civil society on the other. Unfortunately, this goal could not quite be realized. We can regret this, but we must also appreciate that the conference increased the awareness of a number of actors regarding the importance of promoting discussion among international organizations.

In our view, the overall result of the Assembly is very satisfactory. The determination expressed in Copenhagen in 1995 was reinforced, in particular because of the adoption of 40 new initiatives aimed at implementing the results of the Conference in an operational manner.

The time has now come to look to the future and to come up with better solutions to ensure the best possible follow up to Copenhagen and Geneva. Switzerland actively supports the international forum for social development and intends to participate actively in this important initiative. Switzerland will also make financial contributions to this project. The objective of the forum is to discuss specific measures and operational activities that are necessary to implement fully the commitments undertaken during the Social Summit and the follow-up session. Such a structure will make it possible to bring together the various actors: the United Nations, the specialized agencies and civil society. We invite other Governments and institutions to join this project in order to turn it into the efficient tool needed if the commitments of the Social Summit are to be successfully fulfilled.

In conclusion I would like to thank once again all participants in the special session for having accepted our invitation to come to Geneva.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): I wish at the outset to express the regret of my delegation that the debate on an issue of such importance as social development is again being used as a platform from which to level accusations against another Member State. It is most unfortunate that certain speakers, including the Palestinian observer, have chosen to politicize this issue, an action which will only distract our attention and our energy from achieving our common development goals.

In addressing social development, this Organization has taken upon itself a moral obligation to protect the weakest of society, especially the children, from exploitation and cruelty. For years, Palestinian children have been raised on hatred. They have been taught in their textbooks that Jews are demonic and Israelis are the everlasting enemy. They have been surrounded by messages from their authority figures praising the death of a martyr and idolizing any violent confrontation with the Israeli enemy. They have been sent to summer camps which teach them how to shoot rifles, build firebombs, attack soldiers and murder Jews. They have been deprived of an education as Palestinian schools have gone on strike in solidarity with the struggle against Israel, a strike which has left the children with nowhere to go but the streets and the riots. To add to this despicable exploitation of the child, Palestinian gunmen have taken cover behind these youths, opening deadly fire on Israeli soldiers and then cynically claiming Israeli brutality as the children are caught in the inevitable crossfire.

Israel also deeply regrets the suffering which has come to Palestinian society as a result of their leadership's decision to pursue violence rather than negotiation. We have repeatedly made clear that our objective is a negotiated peace settlement that will bring calm and security to all peoples of the region. The peace process has already brought tangible economic and social benefits to the territories under the administration of the Palestinian Authority. This has been especially true during the periods of relative calm. In 1998, the gross domestic product of these areas grew by a whopping 8 per cent. In 1999, Palestinian unemployment decreased by 13 per cent, much of that due to the improved Israeli-Palestinian neighbourly relations, which permitted the daily entry of tens of thousands of Palestinians into Israel, where they were employed in a variety of sectors.

I will spare this Assembly a long list of statistics which confirm the positive economic developments that have occurred as a result of peace and cooperation. Suffice it to mention that a number of United Nations reports, including the latest report from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the report of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the territories, point to the tangible rewards that the peace process has brought to the Palestinian people.

I wish to stress that these positive developments are a direct result of the peace process and the period of relative calm which preceded this latest Palestinian violence. In choosing to resort to violence, the Palestinians, as a matter of course, undo much of the economic gains that have been achieved. By seeking to achieve their goals by force rather than by negotiation, the Palestinians are bringing economic calamity upon themselves by their own hand. Perhaps this time, the Palestinian leadership will finally learn that violence does not pay.

It should also be stressed that the current violence comes on the heels of the Camp David summit, at which the Government of Israel displayed an unprecedented willingness to compromise for the sake of peace. Had an agreement been concluded at that time, not only would the present situation have been avoided, but the Palestinian people would have reaped even greater economic rewards than those of the past several years. It is unacceptable that, after refusing to even consider Israel's peace overtures, the Palestinians now seek to blame Israel for their current economic predicament.

I say again: we do not intend to hurt the Palestinian economy or to inflict unnecessary suffering on the Palestinian people. Unfortunately, however, the current situation requires us to safeguard both our population and theirs. It is our sincerest hope that there will be a return to calm and stability in the region that will permit us to return to the path of cooperation with our Palestinian neighbours.

Mrs. Barghouti (Palestine): I did not wish to take the floor at this very late hour, but I have to make some clarification in response to the Israeli allegations about the improvement of the Palestinian situation.

The Israeli delegation wants to convince us that there is such a thing as a good occupation, a benign occupation. I just want to say that there is no benign occupation. Occupation is the most devastating factor in the economic and social situation of the Palestinian people.

As for the other remarks that he made about the children and their not going to school, I just want to say that it is a fact that the entire occupied territory, including Jerusalem, is under siege and occupation. Israeli policies and practices are the main factor preventing our children from going to school. All the

cities and villages are under total Israeli siege and closed off to all movement, be it of people or goods.

On the other issue of the peace process, everybody knows — and I would just remind the Israeli representative — that the Government of Israel would stop the negotiations. They have said that there is a time-out to consider and re-evaluate the peace process. Our delegation and our Government are committed to the peace process and we will make every effort to have a successful peace process.

Mr. Al-Hariri (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation wishes to reply to the statement made by the Israeli representative that some delegations have attempted to politicize the issue. Let me just recall that, at the Copenhagen Summit and at the twenty-fourth special session, there was a clear reference to the fact that foreign occupation is one of the foremost obstacles to social development.

My delegation, in referring to the issue, stated — and this is a well-known position of my country — that Israeli occupation of the Syrian Arab Golan has caused the displacement of more than 500,000 Syrians. Many of them have been collectively displaced; their homes were demolished and they were deprived of the use of their land, their rights and their resources. Many citizens were displaced from the Golan, which places further burdens on the State, burdens that affect social development. This was also taken up by the report of the special session and the Copenhagen Summit.

If that speaker ignores the fact that this is the core of the issue, then that is another matter. As for the other points he made regarding the situation in the region, all can watch on their television screens how the Israeli forces of occupation are demolishing homes, uprooting trees, killing children, laying siege to Palestinians and their towns — collective terrorism unseen in history.

We had hoped to hear a commitment to international resolutions of legitimacy and to resolutions adopted by this Organization every year. However, Israeli defiance and arrogance — their rejection of international legitimacy and the resolutions of this Organization — are obvious. The international community must respond to this challenge that must be brought to an end. International legitimacy must prevail. Commitment to United Nations resolutions is a sine qua non for anyone wishing to sit in this international forum and be part of the international community.

The President: I call on the representative of Israel, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): It appears that perhaps the natural logic of cause and effect continues to escape our Palestinian neighbours. Almost every speaker in today's debate has stressed the obvious negative impact of violence and conflict on social development. The case of the Palestinian decision to resort to violence and its negative impact on the Palestinian economy and society is no exception. The obvious solution is a negotiation rather than a confrontation. And when the confrontation ends, negotiation can again begin.

It would serve us all well to remember and to remind those that perhaps have forgotten the words of the ancient proverb: "He who lives in a glass house should perhaps not throw stones".

The President: I should like to inform members that a draft resolution on this item will be submitted at the later date.

Programme of work

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I would like to inform Members that the General Assembly will take up agenda item 19 tomorrow afternoon concerning the admission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to membership of the United Nations. In this connection, a draft resolution under this item will be issued tomorrow as document A/55/L.23.

The meeting rose at 8.35 p.m.

United Nations A/55/PV.47

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

47th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 1 November 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 50

Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Report of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa (A/55/45)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/55/431)

Mr. Aboulgheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Many initiatives and thoughts for supporting development in Africa have been put forward over the years. However, the results have fallen short of realizing the objectives and aspirations that accompanied each and every one of these initiatives. Despite the fact that the development of any society is the responsibility first and foremost of that society and its Government, and despite sincere efforts to promote and develop African societies — particularly the least developed in the continent — the objectives will not be achieved as long as the international environment is not supportive.

In many cases this works against the interests of developing countries in general, and the least developed countries of Africa in particular. The questions of indebtedness, poverty and the shortfall of official development assistance (ODA), as well as disease — in particular, malaria and AIDS — all represent abnormal obstacles that prevent the attainment of the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of the continent to development and progress.

Despite the fact that the challenges of development and people's failure to realize their aspirations are considered one of the most salient causes of conflict and wars in Africa, we should not ignore the historical origins of these crises and the negative role played by many of the past imperial forces in sowing the seeds of conflict among the newly independent States just before their independence, whether because of the way they delineated the borders of these States or by fomenting tribal and ethnic strife among and between the States of the continent.

I recall these facts so that we do not find ourselves supporting the repeated claims that the African people bear the original responsibility for their wars and conflicts, that what is usually called the tribal nature of these people is to blame or, simplistically, that the crisis of development and the causes of conflict in Africa stem from the tribal circumstances of the African people or the absence of so-called good governance in some African States. If there is an element of truth in these claims, we must also consider the whole picture so that our judgement and apportionment of responsibility can be more accurate.

In facing the challenges of development in Africa, the continent sorely needs the United Nations to undertake a clear, effective and definite role for the settlement of conflicts on the continent. Not only does Africa expect the United Nations to move to contain

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the conflicts that rage on the continent, but it also expects the international community to move quickly, before the exacerbation and expansion of these conflicts.

The Secretary-General has, on more than one occasion, shown that the real problem does not stem from the absence of early warning mechanisms that alert us to the possibility of a crisis on the continent. It lies, rather, in the need for the United Nations to follow these warnings by undertaking speedy and effective measures, which have been lacking. We hope in this respect that the United Nations will take seriously the events that have recently intensified on the borders between Guinea and Sierra Leone and Liberia and address them decisively and quickly, since they presage a new regional conflict in the continent whose repercussions we cannot anticipate if the international community should fail to stem the crisis early.

More than two and a half years ago, in April 1998, the Secretary-General issued a report on the causes of conflict in Africa (A/52/871). There is no doubt that the African continent has since witnessed many of the developments referred to in the report regarding peace and security in the continent, peacekeeping, peacemaking, post-conflict peace-building and creating basic infrastructure to prevent the resumption of conflicts in Africa in the future.

During the same period, we have clearly witnessed greater determination by Africa — at the continental level, represented by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and at the subregional level — in settling its own disputes and in initiatives undertaken to end the wars raging in some countries. This African determination has been evident on more than one occasion, including the role played by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Sierra Leone, President Chiluba's efforts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, President Mandela's efforts in Burundi, the role played by President Bouteflika in ending the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea and President Omar Guelleh's great efforts culminating in the establishment of the first national Government in Somalia since 1991.

Egypt has always supported and participated in African efforts to find African solutions to the continent's problems. Egypt also reiterates that this expanded African role should in no way relieve the United Nations and the Security Council of their basic responsibilities towards the continent. It should not contribute to marginalizing the role of the international Organization and one of its main organs by supporting and enhancing regional efforts only so that the role of the international community becomes secondary and complementary.

Accordingly, while we welcome the increased importance the continent has recently been given within various circles and organs of the United Nations, we still believe there is a large gap between what the international community determines and commits to undertake to prevent and resolve conflicts on the continent and the actual steps taken to fulfil its collective responsibility in maintaining international peace and security in Africa and in overcoming the root causes of the conflicts that have severely damaged the continent's political, economic and social infrastructure.

The report of the Open-ended Working Group (A/55/45) before us clearly emphasizes that the genuine will of the international community in responding to African conflicts is absent. We are hopeful that the United Nations response to the conflict that began last May in Sierra Leone will be the rule and not the exception in the international community's treatment of African conflicts, which have become very complicated due to their political, security, ethnic and social dimensions. In this regard, we look forward to the Security Council's commitment, in accordance with the Millennium Declaration adopted by the General Assembly on 8 September 2000, to rededicate itself to attaching equal importance to the maintenance of international peace and security in all regions of the world, while attaching special importance to Africa and its unique needs and requirements.

We are also encouraged by the Secretary-General's statement, at the thirty-sixth session of the OAU summit at Lomé last July, that the United Nations is ready to assist Africa at all times and with all means available. We hope that the Secretary-General will continue to offer his good offices so that the United Nations will remain focused on African issues and problems and so that it will follow up the implementation of the Secretary-General's valuable recommendations on the causes of conflict in Africa.

Certainly there are many other areas in which we expect the international community to show interest in support of African endeavours to achieve peace,

stability and democracy on the continent. Unlike the role we require the United Nations to undertake under the Charter in the maintenance of international peace and security, the efforts of the international community, we hope, will be concentrated on supporting and reactivating the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and will contribute generously to the trust fund established by the United Nations for that purpose.

We also call on the United Nations to support efforts within the continent to implement the plan of action adopted at the recent Lomé summit, as proposed at the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa, and to continue its activities aimed at supporting other structures and mechanisms in various fields in the continent agreed to by the African States.

The Working Group on the causes of conflict in Africa plays a central role in following up the implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations, in determining the obstacles to their full implementation and in presenting specific proposals to reach the desired objectives. Undoubtedly, the report prepared by the Working Group is a worthy achievement that is useful for maintaining the momentum to enhance and coordinate all activities and initiatives undertaken by the United Nations and its relevant agencies for the establishment of peace, development and stability in Africa.

In this regard, I wish to express the Egyptian delegation's appreciation for the efforts of the co-Vice-Chairmen of the Group, the Ambassadors of Singapore and Spain, in guiding the Working Group during the last session of the General Assembly. We hope that the mandate of the Working Group will be extended to the next session of the General Assembly so that it will continue to play the important role entrusted to it under General Assembly resolution 54/234.

We, the Ambassadors of Africa are confident that the sincere efforts of the President of the General Assembly and the personal interest he has shown during our discussions with him will ensure the best possible participation and support for the Working Group from the entire membership of the Assembly. We assure the President of our complete readiness to cooperate with him and with the Bureau of the Working Group dealing with this issue so that we may achieve the laudable objectives which we all desire.

The President: I would like to thank the representative of Egypt for his cooperation in helping us begin the debate on time. I would also like to thank the representative of Singapore for his readiness to help our debate to proceed smoothly.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): I have to begin on a sombre note. First, we would like to thank all our friends and colleagues who have conveyed their sympathies and condolences to us on the tragic crash of the Singapore Airlines aircraft in Taipei yesterday. Secondly, as nationals of several countries lost their lives in the accident, we would also like to convey our sincere condolences to all the families who lost loved ones in the crash.

I would now like to begin my formal remarks on the agenda item, Mr. President, by thanking your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for inviting me to serve as a Vice-Chairman of the open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa. I was equally privileged to have served alongside my fellow Vice-Chairman, Ambassador Inocencio Arias, the Permanent Representative of Spain. Ambassador Arias brought to our common task wisdom, humour and strong diplomatic skills, which helped to guide our Working Group to a successful conclusion.

The mandate of our Working Group was to monitor the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report of April 1998, as well as the proposals made by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 1999. We began our work with modest expectations. The record of open-ended working groups within our house is, unfortunately, a mixed one. New Zealand's *United Nations Handbook* lists four open-ended working groups. Two have suspended their work. One, the Working Group on Security Council reform, is still continuing its work. The Working Group on Africa is therefore the fourth to have been established. Given the track record of our peers in the area of working groups, we were afraid that we would achieve little. In the end, we were relieved that we made some progress.

All in all, we had three meetings: in March, May and July this year. At the first session, in March, the Working Group decided that it required more information on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's

report. Hence, we invited the relevant organizations of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions to address the Group. At the second session, we received comprehensive briefings from the Director for Regional and African Affairs of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and from Mr. Nitin Desai, the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and from representatives from 15 different agencies of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions.

Both Ambassador Arias and I encouraged interactive discussion at the second session. As a result, we learned a considerable amount of useful information. To facilitate a substantive discussion among members, all participants were also provided with detailed matrices prepared by the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries (OSCAL). The matrices, which are contained in the conference paper issued as document (A/AC.258/CRP.3), systematically charted the status of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report. The matrices also laid out a rough roadmap of further steps to be taken by the United Nations system, as well as by Member States.

Our Working Group received a concrete request to set up a one-stop web site containing background information on the work of the Group, its working documents and the statements and reports made to the Group. Fortunately, the web site was launched and operated by OSCAL towards the end of June. The Web site, whose address, incidentally, is given in the report before the Assembly, served as a resource tool to facilitate the work of the Group. It is also a permanent Web resource for future use by resumed sessions of the Group. I think OSCAL should be commended here for the effort it put into designing and maintaining the Web site, as that Web site provides a vivid and live record of the work of the Group.

Our final session was spent negotiating the Working Group's final report. We were pleased to reach a consensus after the usual last-minute negotiations. Both Ambassador Arias and I commend the report to the Assembly for its adoption.

The good news on this issue is that there is now near universal recognition that Africa has special needs. The Millennium Summit Declaration, for example, had a separate section calling on the international community to meet the special needs of Africa. There is also widespread acknowledgement that the Secretary-General's report on Africa and the subsequent initiatives, including the work of our Working Group, have moved the process forward. However, the bad news is that there seems to be little tangible progress on the ground. Africa as a whole holds 13 per cent of the world's population, but is responsible for only 2 per cent of its economic output. Africa is also the only region of the world that is likely to almost double its population in the next 25 years. By then Africa will have 17 per cent of the world's population.

Today, at least 45 per cent of Africans live in poverty, barely surviving on less than $1 a day. Only 15 per cent of Africans today live in an environment considered minimally adequate for sustainable growth and development. Two hundred million Africans have no access to health facilities, while 2 million African children die before the age of five. It is estimated that African countries need annual economic growth rates of 7 per cent or more to eliminate poverty in 15 years, which is the goal set in the Secretary-General's report to the Millennium Assembly. However, African countries are only growing at an annual average rate of 3 per cent. Clearly, these are depressing statistics. A lot more needs to be done to reverse these trends. The Working Group therefore still has many tasks ahead. Both Ambassador Arias and I would like to encourage greater participation from all Member States, African and non-African alike, in the work of the Group, as some of our sessions were, unfortunately, sparsely attended.

There are a lot of significant new initiatives on Africa; for example, the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act and the recent Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Free Trade Area. Some effort should be made to coordinate all these initiatives and to ensure that they all work together to help Africa. The key test of the success of this Working Group, as well as of this and other initiatives, is that one must show substantive results on the ground. Enough papers have been written on Africa's needs. The time has now come to seek concrete results.

Success will ultimately be possible only if the global community becomes a stakeholder in Africa's progress. In a shrinking globe, as we move towards becoming a true global village, we cannot afford to

leave behind any section of our village community. Many studies have indeed been written about the dangers of leaving behind sections of our community. A recent book by Mr. Thomas Homer-Dixon entitled *The Ingenuity Gap: How Will We Solve the Problems of the Future* makes the following observations:

> "If a society develops a serious ingenuity gap — that is, if it loses the race between requirement and supply — prosperity falls in the regions already affected by scarcity, and people usually migrate out of those regions in large numbers. Social dissatisfaction rises, especially among marginal groups in ecologically fragile rural areas and urban squatter settlements. These changes undermine the government's legitimacy and raise the likelihood of widespread and chronic civil violence. Violence further erodes the society's capacity to supply ingenuity, especially by causing human and financial capital to flee".

We therefore urge all members of our global community to participate more actively in the work of the Working Group on Africa; let it not suffer the fate of similar working groups.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): I am pleased to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, as well as the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Liechtenstein, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the opportunity to examine today the report of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa. The Working Group, which met on three occasions, each lasting a week, in March, May and July 2000, made a number of recommendations in various areas, all of which are fundamental for the future of the African continent: poverty eradication; HIV/AIDS; environment; debt; development financing; conflict prevention, peace and conflict management; refugees; and better coordination of international aid.

Before going into details concerning the significant lessons we may draw from the Working Group's proceedings and from the detailed recommendations made in its report, I should like to reiterate the European Union's commitment to the establishment of an integrated United Nations approach towards Africa. Such an integrated approach must effectively take into account the political, social and economic dimensions of conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Very clearly, that is one of the essential recommendations of the Secretary-General's report (A/52/871) published in April 1998. This is an issue which is as topical as ever, and which once again has been highlighted in the report (A/55/305) of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations chaired by Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi: development without peace is no more possible than peace without development. The European Union thus intends to continue tirelessly to urge that Africa's specific needs regarding peace and development should be taken into greater account in all international forums, particularly those of the United Nations.

The European Union is encouraged by the positive and constructive atmosphere that always prevailed in the meetings of the Working Group. Although the pitfall of duplicating the debate in other forums was not always avoided, the hearing given by the Working Group to representatives of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and to the Secretary-General's representatives on the ground undeniably helped enrich our collective thinking. The quality of the Working Group's endeavour is also reflected in the content of what is a balanced and reasonably determined report. In large part, this is thanks to the personal involvement of the Chairman, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, and also to the energetic and determined action of the two Vice-Chairmen, Ambassadors Kishore Mahbubani of Singapore and Inocencio Arias of Spain, from whom the Assembly has just heard. The European Union would like to salute the decisive contribution of those individuals to the success of this exercise, which was not a foregone conclusion.

On the Working Group's working methods, I must also add that the European Union was particularly impressed by the intelligent and intensive use of the Internet. The creation of a web site devoted to the Working Group's proceedings enabled delegations to keep constantly abreast of the progress of discussions and of the contributions made by all participants; it

also made the outside world better acquainted with the Working Group's approach.

For the European Union, it is thus absolutely essential that the General Assembly provide concrete operational follow-up to the Working Group's suggestions and that the investment made, which is considerable, not be overlooked or underutilized.

On the actual content of the Working Group's report, the European Union still regrets, as we said last July, that sufficiently strong emphasis has not yet been placed on the decisive issue of conflict prevention. The grave crises that have occurred in Africa since the publication of the Secretary-General's report in April 1998 — the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict, the increased risk of the Sierra Leone conflict spilling over into neighbouring countries — show that we can never invest enough in prevention. The United Nations must also provide more and better support for regional efforts towards peace and security, including, where necessary, by making available financial or human resources. For its part, the European Union has played an active role in the mediation exercise conducted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict, and intends to continue that effort. The European Union notes with great interest the latest recommendations of the Security Council mission to Sierra Leone with respect to increasing the assistance to be provided to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) regarding regional security.

Still on the analysis of the causes of conflicts and on doing a better job of averting them, the European Union fully supports the initiatives taken by the Security Council to gain a better understanding of the economic origins and commercial aspects of certain African crises and denouncing the links between trafficking in raw materials and in arms. The establishment of the follow-up mechanism for applying sanctions against UNITA, the setting up of a panel to investigate the illegal exploitation of the resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the establishment of a panel to inquire into illegal trafficking in diamonds and arms in Sierra Leone are all examples of this new approach. The European Union fully supports the better coordination of all these initiatives within an expert structure: by definition, trafficking knows no borders, and the criminal interests are often the same from one crisis to another.

The European Union welcomes the fact that the Economic and Social Council has chosen Africa as a theme for high-level debate at its next substantive session, to be held in July 2001. It is imperative that economic and social thinking on Africa be coordinated and consistent within the United Nations system. Here, the European Union is pleased with the content of the millennium report prepared by the Secretary-General (A/54/2000) and by the Millennium Declaration. The European Union remains firmly committed to implementing the recommendations of that Declaration.

Turning to the observations of the Working Group on the issue of debt, I should like to reiterate that the European Union considers the reinforced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative to be an essential element in combating poverty and achieving the objectives of sustainable development. To date, the European Union has provided 68 per cent of the total contributions paid into the trust fund for financing the HIPC Initiative. We call upon eligible countries to carry out their international political commitments and to take the political and economic measures necessary to engage in this process and to ensure that the funds generated by this initiative are directed towards the social sector, such as education and health, and promote the rule of law, good governance, the participation of civil society and human development.

I would not like to end my statement without recalling the determined commitment of the European Union to continue its ongoing dialogue with African countries on all of these issues. The success of the Africa-Europe Summit, held in Cairo in April 2000 under the auspices of the European Union and the Organization of African Unity, requires us to do so. We shall resolutely continue on that path.

Ms. King (United States of America): I should like to congratulate the Governments of Singapore and Spain on their assumption of the leadership of this critical task.

The report before this Assembly is a broad investigation of the roots of conflict and a host of other ills that continue to bedevil the African continent. I subscribe to its observations and recommendations, but I want to use this important forum to offer some

observations based on our work in the United Nations over the past 15 months.

This discussion has raised some important questions about the causes of conflict today. Of course, these questions and answers are not unique to Africa — conflict has existed on every continent — but they do seem particularly acute in Africa. To my mind, there are four critical questions. First, does poverty cause conflict in Africa? While the relationship between poverty and conflict cannot be denied, it is much more complex than one of simple cause and effect. Some of Africa's most tragic countries are some of the world's richest in natural resources — the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone and Angola, for example. Some of the poorest countries are at peace. In economic terms, Mali is among the poorest countries within the United Nations. However, from the grass-roots level to the presidential palace, Malians are working together to build a better life for themselves and their children. They are building democracy. Though they face many challenges, armed conflict is not one of them.

Secondly, do ethnic divisions cause conflict in Africa? Too many of the world's conflicts, whether in Central Africa, the Balkans or East Timor, have been attributed to ancient ethnic hatreds. This could not be more wrong. Ethnic groups do not have genetic codes for violence and conflict. Indeed, the most recent scientific breakthroughs on the human genome highlight an important fact: in genetic terms, all human beings, regardless of race or ethnicity, are more than 99.9 per cent the same. This means that modern science has confirmed what many of us first learned through our faiths: the most important fact of life on earth is our common humanity.

So why is it that some choose to fight over such minor differences? I contend that it is because of cynical leaders — leaders who seek any means possible to exploit others for personal gain; leaders who choose not to celebrate and draw strength from the minor differences within humanity, but to exacerbate and magnify these minor differences for their own ambitions.

It has been just over a year since the world mourned the loss of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, a leader who presided over a country that is a glorious mosaic of cultures and languages and which today enjoys a strong and vibrant national identity. On the other side of the equation, Somalia might be the most ethnically homogeneous country in Africa, yet it was plunged into a chaos from which it is only now beginning to emerge.

Hutu and Tutsi violence in Rwanda and Burundi does not reflect a permanent animus. Rather, it represents a divide-and-conquer strategy by which colonial and post-colonial politicians sought to perpetuate their rule. Such people are not true nationalists; they are opportunists who seek to stoke nationalist and ethnic fires for their own personal gain. As we have seen all over the world, politicians and opportunists who sow the seeds of ethnic chauvinism for self-advancement can plunge entire regions into chaos. They — not the forces they unleash — are responsible for the violence that ensues.

Thirdly, do religious differences cause conflict in Africa? We see the same twisted dynamic at work as leaders try to exploit religious differences for personal gain. Until very recently, there had never been any tensions between Christians and Muslims in Côte d'Ivoire. Sectarian violence was unheard of in one of Africa's strongest economies and most open and welcoming societies. In most parts of East and West Africa, Christians and Muslims coexist with no difficulties. However, in many countries — not just in Africa — unscrupulous leaders often try to create sectarian violence as a means to political influence. That is an indictment of those individuals, not of the millions of faithful who can live in harmony.

I took note when the Ivorian Minister of the Interior visited the mass grave of victims of recent unrest and said that the massacre was alien to the culture of his great country and a source of shame for all Ivorians. That sentiment was almost as important as his pledge of a full and immediate investigation, for it showed that such acts are contrary to the political and civic culture of Côte d'Ivoire, and must remain that way.

Fourthly, do colonial boundaries cause conflict in Africa? Apart from those from island Member States, all of us live in places with arbitrary boundaries, yet this does not make conflict inevitable. Zambia borders two countries racked by conflict — Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — and three more that have had internal conflicts in the past 25 years: Namibia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Zambia's people share common languages and identities with all of their neighbours, and the country's boundaries

reflect the intersection of Belgian, British, German and Portuguese colonialism. However, Zambia is at peace with itself and its neighbours.

Again, I refuse to believe that conflict is inevitable. In accordance with United States experience in the Balkans and more recently in Africa, we reject the thesis that so-called ancient hatreds determine the fate of nations. We also reject the concept of a "failed" State. States and peoples do not fail; leaders fail.

Perhaps the true cause of conflict in Africa is unaccountable governance. If there is war when people want peace, the inescapable conclusion is that the Governments making war are not listening to their people.

Take any conflict — internal or external — in Africa today. Whether we discuss Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea or Somalia, the international community and, more importantly, the people in these countries, need to ask the following questions. Where are the parliaments demanding to know why the executive branches have committed the resources of the State to a conflict? Where are the courts demanding to investigate charges of human rights abuses and outright theft? Where are the newspapers and radio stations demanding to know who made the decision to go to war? Where is civil society to tell armed movements to lay down their weapons and enter the political life of their countries? Where are the opposition political parties demanding votes of confidence in Governments that make war? Where are the trade unions, churches and civic organizations demanding to know why their men are sent to fight and die in wars that are not of their making? Where are the women's organizations demanding to know why their Governments and movements make war when their children cannot afford to go to school? Where are the Ministries of Finance and the central banks demanding an accounting of money spent and stolen by officials of the State itself? Where are the opportunities for voters to change Governments that make war or repudiate movements that will not make peace?

The Security Council is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. However, nowhere in the Charter of the United Nations does it say that we are collectively responsible for ensuring good government in other peoples' countries. What are we to do, however, if our obligation to maintain peace and security conflicts with our desire to maintain the national sovereignty of our members? We, as the United Nations, and we, as the Security Council, can address the effects of conflicts and even alleviate many of the symptoms of conflict. However, only through the advancement of the universal principle of accountable governance, which we believe comes with democracy, can we truly begin to live up to the challenges embodied in the United Nations Charter.

The United Nations and the United States share a wonderful common bond: our founding documents begin with the phrase "We the people." Although the United Nations Charter uses the word "peoples," I believe that in either case a reading of our instructions really does not need to go any further than the first three words.

There has been much talk over the last year about which organ of the United Nations is supreme. At the end of the day, we believe that in our people lies the true authority of this Organization, or of any Government. I do not mean the people as an abstract concept; I mean the people as the individuals who, for example, will decide on 7 November if some of us in this room have to find a new line of work. When every President, every Minister and every Permanent Representative in Africa knows that his or her job depends on the approval of their people, I predict that the job of maintaining international peace and security in that part of the world will get easier.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation thanks the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa for its report, which has offered a systematic analysis of the implementation of the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report; it also offers an analysis of the agreed conclusions on African development adopted at the Economic and Social Council substantive session of 1999, and the obstacles facing such implementation. In addition, it puts forward recommendations for further action in this regard. We appreciate the outstanding jobs done by Mr. Mahbubani, Ambassador of Singapore, and Mr. Arias, Ambassador of Spain, in their capacity as the two Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group.

In the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the heads of State or Government expressed their resolve to

> "support the consolidation of democracy in Africa and assist Africans in their struggle for lasting peace, poverty eradication and sustainable development, thereby bringing Africa into the mainstream of the world economy".

This marks the latest commitment made by the international community for Africa and is one of vital importance.

Seventy per cent of the conflicts discussed in the Security Council are in Africa; therefore, African conflicts should arouse our concern. The Brahimi report contains many views and recommendations regarding peacekeeping operations in Africa. We hope that the work of the Working Group will be matched with the recommendations of the Brahimi report and will play a great role in peace-making, peacekeeping and peace-building following conflicts in Africa. We hope that the Security Council will attach importance to this.

Thanks to the efforts of African countries and the support of the international community, the African economy has looked up in recent years. However, according to statistics, the general situation in Africa is still worrisome, and the gap between its development level and that of the world as a whole continues to widen. The small and vulnerable economies in Africa, and the least developed countries in particular, have found themselves in an even less favourable situation. Currently, 52 per cent of the African population still live on less than one dollar a day. The absolute majority of the 48 least developed countries of the world, the absolute majority of the world's refugees, and 90 per cent of the world's children who have become orphans because their parents have died of HIV/AIDS, are in Africa.

Given the opportunities and potential brought about by globalization, it is a shame to see that the vast number of African countries have been excluded from globalization, that they have been marginalized, or even forced to bear the negative impact of the process; this is something that no one can accept with peace of mind.

On the one hand, African countries should bear the responsibility for their own prosperity, stability and development. On the other hand, it is also a common task of the international community. The peace- and development-related problems in Africa have been inherited from the past; they are long-standing and deep-rooted. They have complex social, economic and other kinds of causes and need to be addressed by African countries and the international community with a comprehensive and integrated approach. The overriding priority at present is to see to it that the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, as well as the relevant commitments in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, will be translated into more effective actions.

According to the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group, African countries and the international community have already taken many steps to implement the Secretary-General's recommendations, some of which have yielded positive results. However, just as the report has pointed out, there are still many obstacles in the way of the implementation process. The recommendations put forward in the report for overcoming those obstacles and for taking further actions have already been largely accepted by African countries. It is our hope that when further actions are pursued, country-specific programmes will be developed on the basis of the specific conditions of the countries concerned. The responsibilities of the country concerned and those of the international community should also be specified for better fulfilment.

I wish to highlight the following points pertaining to international actions in this regard. First, the international community should pay attention to the special needs of Africa and assist African countries to integrate into the world economy and achieve economic growth and sustainable development. In this era of great changes, the institutional capacities of African countries are still too weak for them to compete successfully on the global level. For this reason, in discussions concerning international economic, financial and trade policies, it is extremely important to ensure that we have the participation of the African countries and that their interests be well protected. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the development of human resources and capacity-building in other fields.

Secondly, there should be a stronger flow of funds to Africa. At the present stage, Africa still has a lot of practical difficulties in absorbing private investments and official development assistance (ODA) continues to play a dominant role there. Therefore, there is an enormous need for ODA to be increased as soon as possible to the level of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product (GNP) of developed countries, as promised. At the same time, all Governments and international organizations should look for feasible methods to encourage foreign direct investment in Africa. We also hope to see tangible results in this regard at the high-level international intergovernmental event on financing for development to be held next year.

Thirdly, steps should be taken to increase market access for African countries. In particular, developed countries should eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers against superior products from Africa, so as to help African countries enhance development through trade.

Fourthly, the external debts of African countries should be further reduced and cancelled. At present, relevant proposals on debt relief have failed to achieve satisfactory results and have given rise to worries on the part of many African countries. We appeal to relevant international financial institutions and major creditor countries to listen to the voice of African countries and take bigger steps forward in this regard.

Fifthly, real actions should be taken to promote transfers of technology, including efforts to create information technology opportunities for African countries. In particular, we should give priority to helping African countries build their infrastructures and develop human resources in order to support their use of information technology so as to achieve rapid growth.

Sixthly, the unchecked spread of infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria, which are a great drain on human and economic resources, has become a serious economic and social problem in African countries, as well as a big challenge to their security. We welcome the efforts made by African countries and the international community to fight against these diseases. We also support the proposal to convene a special session of the General Assembly on the issue of HIV/AIDS, and we hope the special session will mobilize entire societies and provide effective policies and measures, with a view to winning the war against HIV/AIDS.

Finally, we endorse the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Working Group's report that the great number of proposals on the issue of Africa must be sorted out and narrowed down to effective and well-coordinated ones, so as to make a greater use of precious resources, improve efficiency and create maximum favourable conditions for African development. We are of the view that the mandate of the Ad Hoc Working Group should be extended, in order to continue to promote the implementation of the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report.

The China-Africa Cooperation Forum, Ministerial Conference, Beijing 2000 was successfully convened 10 to 12 October. Approximately 80 ministers from 45 African countries and representatives of about 20 regional organizations attended this event. The twin themes of the conference were, first, how to push ahead with the establishment of a fair and just new international political and economic order in the twenty-first century so as to safeguard the common interests of developing countries, and, secondly, how to promote China-Africa cooperation under new circumstances, in substantive fields such as trade and the economy. Participants had an extensive exchange of views in this regard. The Conference adopted the Beijing Declaration of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum and the programme for China-Africa cooperation in economic and social development. The former reflected the common ground between China and Africa on major international issues, while the latter provided highly detailed and feasible programmes for China-Africa cooperation in all fields.

At the forum, China made four commitments concerning its continued support for the economic and social development of African countries. First, China undertook to provide, within its capacity and within the framework of South-South cooperation, all forms of assistance and aid to African countries, in accordance with the specific economic conditions of those countries. China's assistance and aid to Africa do not have any political conditions attached to them and are not aimed at seeking any political privileges. Also, so as to better satisfy the needs of African countries, China's assistance and aid will grow and be more effectively delivered as China's economy and overall national strength grow. Secondly, the Chinese side is undertaking to reduce or cancel debts amounting to 10

billion yuan renminbi owed by the heavily indebted poor countries and least-developed countries in Africa in the coming two years. Thirdly, the Chinese side will set aside special funds to support and encourage investment by Chinese enterprises in African countries. At the same time, China will help expand exports from African countries to China based on the principle of giving preference to African products, other things being equal. Fourthly, China will establish an African human-resources-development fund and expand China-Africa cooperation in a wider range of fields, especially in the fields of human-resources development, science and technology, and education. The fund will gradually grow in scale as a means to help African countries train more professional staff of all kinds.

The China-Africa Cooperation Forum was a collective dialogue between the two sides conducted at the turn of the century, as well as a successful and important exploration of their common development. It also marks China's new contribution to the promotion of South-South cooperation. We hope that the Forum will make greater contributions to peace and development on the African continent.

Mr. Kpotsra (Togo) (*spoke in French*): This is the third straight time since the publication in April 1998 of the important report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa that the General Assembly has considered this item. This year the Assembly will be discussing the item in the light of the report drafted by the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group, established pursuant to resolution 54/234. But this consideration will take place with constant reference to the specifically African aspects of this question expressed in the Millennium Declaration adopted on 8 September 2000.

We will also be mindful of the fact that our consideration of the report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa by various bodies — in particular the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council — has already allowed us to analyse its political, economic and social recommendations and to define operational approaches to be followed in their implementation.

I wish to express my profound gratitude to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, and to the two Vice-Chairmen of the Ad Hoc Working Group, the Permanent Representatives of Spain and Singapore, for their excellent work.

Following its three sessions, the Ad Hoc Working Group concluded that the implementation of the recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General demonstrates that, despite some progress, obstacles remain to their effective implementation and that new guidelines are necessary to hasten it. The areas identified by the Ad Hoc Working Group as having enjoyed progress are numerous and various. Although real and tangible, this progress should not induce us to lose sight of the need to pursue efforts to find new, innovative solutions. The work that remains to be done is enormous.

I turn now to peacemaking. The Security Council has accorded special attention to improving sanctions regimes in Africa, to the plight of refugees and displaced persons in Africa and to the protection of children in armed conflict. It has shown its resolve to consider post-conflict peace-building, as demonstrated by its initiatives in Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and the Central African Republic. Recent public debates and the resolutions adopted in their wake are eloquent testimony to this new dynamism in its work.

What is revealing of the pre-eminent role that the Security Council intends to play in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa is the fact that the Council is seeking to acquire a better understanding of the conflicts besetting the continent. This approach is evident not only in field missions dispatched this year — particularly to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea/Ethiopia and Sierra Leone — but also in its direct dialogues with the protagonists to the conflicts. We might consider, for example, the public meetings and private consultations held in January 2000 with several heads of State of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in relation to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In this context of multiple conflicts, it becomes clear that any action to implement the Secretary-General's recommendations must necessarily fail in unstable areas and that, without peace and stability, there can be no activities to establish sustainable development in Africa. This is the point being made by the Ad Hoc Working Group when it stresses in

particular the need for the political will that must underpin any effort of Africans themselves and the international community. Accordingly, Africa is trying to fight the proliferation of and illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons that sustain conflicts and transborder crime.

We hope that the Pan African Conference of Ministers on this issue, to be held at Bamako from 30 November to 1 December, will provide African countries with an opportunity to prepare for the forthcoming United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held next year.

We cannot discuss progress in the implementation of the recommendations which the Secretary-General makes in his report without stressing that Africa is trying, through such Organization of African Unity (OAU) mechanisms as the African Ministerial Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa, to create conditions conducive to sustainable development. Th Ad Hoc Working Group supports this process and calls on the Secretary-General to help implement it.

One point worth making is that Africa has, in many cases predating the Secretary-General's report, created instruments for conflict management, such as the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, the Conflict Management Centre and the Early Warning System. The subregional initiatives of African States should also be mentioned as part of this trend. However, these mechanisms must receive financial support if we genuinely wish to strengthen African peacekeeping capacities.

Despite the Security Council's renewed interest in Africa, our continent remains host to the most deadly conflicts and to the most refugees and displaced persons. With particular respect to refugees in Africa, the Ad Hoc Working Group stresses the fact that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other competent bodies have undertaken activities to strengthen their security and to safeguard the civilian, humanitarian nature of their camps and shelters. However, these actions, like so many other initiatives — and I am thinking in particular of the partnership between the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and the UNHCR — have failed qualitatively to improve the plight of refugees in Africa. In many cases, refugees remain the sole responsibility of the host countries, which, given their own precarious economic situation, are unable to give them the required assistance. I cannot fail to emphasize once again how disturbing it is to become aware of the extreme imbalance between the way refugees are treated in Africa and the assistance they receive in other parts of the world.

In the light of all this, the thirty-sixth OAU Summit — which stressed the need for African States to continue to address the underlying causes of the problem of refugees in Africa — strongly urged the international community to provide the necessary resources and funds to undertake the comprehensive implementation plan adopted at the ad hoc meeting of governmental and non-governmental technical experts, held under the auspices of the OAU and UNHCR in Conakry, Guinea, from 27 to 29 March 2000, as well as the recommendations of the sixth OAU-International Committee of the Red Cross Seminar on International Humanitarian Law, held in Addis Ababa on 15 and 16 May.

Africa hopes that this appeal will be promptly heeded. We applaud the recent appointment of Mr. Ruud Lubbers to the post of High Commissioner for Refugees and call on him to make action for refugees in Africa one of his priorities during his term of office.

The question of relief for African debt has been identified by the Ad Hoc Working Group as one area in which the Secretary-General's recommendations have also begun to be implemented. As I stressed recently before the Second Committee when discussing the item on macroeconomic policy questions and the external debt crisis, we cannot fail to recognize that, in recent years, the international community has striven to undertake commendable initiatives to help implement appropriate solutions to problems of debt stock and debt servicing. We are pleased to refer to the decision taken in Cologne in June 1999 by the Group of 8 to enhance the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative, which was endorsed in September 1999 by the International Monetary and Financial Committee of the International Monetary Fund and the Development Committee of the World Bank. Pursuant to a choice made by the Group of 8 itself, nine heavily indebted countries are already benefiting from this decision.

However, these one-time solutions will not enable sub-Saharan African countries to devote the bulk of their resources on basic social services — far from it — because debt reimbursements divert valuable resources from projects, the implementation of which would help to eradicate poverty. That is why the thirty-sixth OAU Summit demanded that the HIPC Initiative be extended to all African countries as a step towards the simple cancellation of African debt.

It is encouraging that the Ad Hoc Working Group, which is in favour of cancelling the debt of the least developed countries (LDCs), suggested that the General Assembly give serious consideration to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development proposal to set up an independent body to evaluate the viability of African debt, with a commitment to cancel the debt of the highly indebted poor countries — debt that is considered unlikely to be repaid. We hope that these recommendations and all other initiatives will be considered in depth at the intergovernmental event on financing for development, to be held in 2001, in which Africa intends to take a very active part.

The Ad Hoc Working Group has identified a number of obstacles to the speedy implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations in his report (A/52/871) on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. These obstacles have to do with, inter alia, the general public health situation. In this regard, we agree that if there is one area where there has been a dramatic deterioration in the situation since the publication of the report of the Secretary-General, it is the incidence of HIV/AIDS and its impact on Africa's future. This pandemic has become a real development problem and represents a real threat to the survival of the human race, particularly in Africa.

At this session the General Assembly intends to give serious thought to the question of HIV/AIDS. We welcome that, because there is no doubt that if there is one problem that requires urgent, concerted and energetic intervention by the international community, it is the struggle against this pandemic. The situation of AIDS orphans in Africa, who, according to some predictions, will number 40 million in 2010, shows the social impact of this pandemic, whose effects are made worse by the high cost of medicines.

Apart from HIV/AIDS, malaria is a source of great concern for Africa. Statistics indicate that there are 400 million people suffering from malaria in the world, 300 million of them in Africa, and that 2 million people die of this disease each year. Its impact goes far beyond the area of public health; it has now become an important socio-economic development question.

This tragic situation impelled the African heads of State and Government, at a special meeting in Abuja on 24 and 25 April 2000 to adopt the Declaration and Plan of Action on "Roll Back Malaria", on the basis of which the thirty-sixth summit of the Organization of African Unity deemed it timely to appeal to the United Nations to proclaim 2001-2010 the decade to reduce malaria. Africa hopes that the General Assembly will follow up on this request very soon.

The crucial health problems facing Africa highlight Africa's lack of financial resources. As we know, the best initiatives to promote economic and social development in Africa must be supported by the availability of adequate financial resources. However, we note with concern that official development assistance (ODA) has been declining since 1990. From $23 billion in 1992, it dropped to $18 billion in 1997, and this trend is continuing inexorably. At the same time, we note with regret that this decline also affects multilateral assistance, because development aid provided by United Nations funds and programmes and specialized agencies is also declining, thus jeopardizing the development of African States. It is encouraging, however, that some countries, such as Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland have reached or even gone beyond the goal of 0.7 per cent of GDP for ODA. It is essential that all donor countries resolve to raise their ODA levels to the goal of 0.7 per cent of GNP for the developing countries and 0.15 per cent for the LDCs.

In this regard, the holding of a meeting on development aid for Africa, for which the Working Group is strongly pushing, would be an opportunity for donor countries to exchange experience in this area. We know that the overall increase of private capital flows to developing countries has largely overshadowed Africa. Furthermore, whereas private loans have practically stopped for Africa, and the total amount of private, non-settled, short-term debt was in 1997 more than $6 billion higher than in the first years of that decade, domestic savings in most African countries continue to be marked by structural weakness.

This precarious situation, which characterizes the state of financial resources in African countries and condemns them to absolute poverty, prompted the General Assembly to state at the special session, Copenhagen + 5, that, despite the battle that has been waged since 1995 against poverty, the number of very poor people has constantly increased and that there persist serious doubts as to whether we will attain the goal of reducing poverty by half by 2015.

In the same context, we cannot be surprised if Africa has doubts about whether the objectives defined by the Dakar Framework for Action, "Education For All," adopted at the World Education Forum in April 2000, can be attained.

In the light of the points I have made, and given the urgent need to find ways to implement the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict, we believe that in order to enable our continent to deal with its enormous problems the mandate of the Ad Hoc Group should be extended. It is also wise, we feel, to support the proposal that the new mandate of the Ad Hoc Group should include the establishment of sub-groups to deal with specific areas, as indicated in chapter IV of the report before us.

Special emphasis should be placed on the contribution of the Economic and Social Council. We welcome its initiative to plan, during its substantive 2001 session, a high-level segment on the role of the United Nations system in supporting the efforts of African countries in bringing about development. In addition, there should be close cooperation between the General Assembly and the Security Council on this subject.

In conclusion, I wish to stress that, aware of its basic responsibility for efforts relating to the promotion of development, Africa is determined to work to improve its political, economic and social situation. In this endeavour, we hope to continue to enjoy the attention and kind support of all those who wish to help Africa.

The President: As members will have seen, we have made some changes in the sequence of speakers at this meeting, due to the absence of some speakers at the beginning. We are now returning to the original list of speakers. I hope that all speakers will be in the Hall on time for future meetings, to avoid disturbances of the debate such as we have experienced today.

May I also remind members of our practice that all speakers not present in the Hall on time will be placed at the very end of the list of speakers. I intend to adhere to that practice.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to extend the condolences of my delegation to the fraternal and friendly country of Singapore following yesterday's Singapore Airlines aeroplane accident. I also wish to express condolences to the families of all of the victims.

Mr. Mungra (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.

My delegation wishes first to express heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, on having established and chaired the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group to consider the follow-up to the Secretary-General's report (A/52/871) on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

Congratulations and sincere gratitude go likewise to the two Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, Mr. Kishore Mahbubani and Mr. Inocencio Arias, Permanent Representatives of Singapore and Spain to the United Nations. They conducted the Group's work with competence, commitment and professionalism, in accordance with the mandate of the General Assembly.

My delegation took an active part in the Group's work, and we salute the spirit of consensus shared by all the participants as well as the culture of dialogue which prevailed throughout the three sessions which culminated in the report before us today, whose structure makes it easy to read and understand.

It is clear from the Group's conclusions that important progress was made in implementing the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General: progress in the promotion of peace, the peacekeeping and in peace-building; progress in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Africa; and progress in attaining social development goals, in providing access to markets and relative progress in debt relief efforts. But there has also been progress in the process of cooperation and regional integration as well as in the harmonization and coordination of multilateral and bilateral initiatives for the economic and social development of the continent.

We should definitely emphasize this progress, but it needs to be seen in the context of the constraints that still impede the free development of Africa. As is rightly stressed in the report of the Working Group, obstacles remain — in some cases, increasing obstacles — to the effective implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General: lack of real political will on the part of the international community; insufficient resources and capacities; governance problems in certain African countries; and the persistence of internal or inter-State armed conflicts. As a matter of urgency, we need to silence the weapons and to understand that there can be no sustainable development in Africa without peace. Hence it is important that Africa make sure that its peace concerns are tied to the relevant recommendations in the Brahimi report (A/55/305). Other obstacles are limited access to scientific and technological innovations and, finally, the weakness of the private sector in Africa.

These are real obstacles. Far from denying or underestimating them, my country believes that we need to consider them and take the right steps to overcome them. But while some are the responsibility of the Governments of the African countries, others are the responsibility of the international community, particularly of the champions of development in Africa.

There is no doubt that at the national level African countries should invest more in building and consolidating the rule of law, in good governance and in respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Similarly, regional and subregional preventive diplomacy and crisis resolution mechanisms must be truly operational. At the same time, they must demonstrate more political will to implement the commitments they have freely entered into for the promotion of regional integration. The signing, last July, in Lomé of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, was a step in the right direction, which the international community should support. Similarly, African Administrations have a basic responsibility to design and implement sustainable inclusive social development policies, strengthen gender equality, implement coherent economic policies and combat poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.

These objectives will not be attained in a context of armed conflict, with the bulk of our national resources being diverted to military purposes. Nor can we combat HIV/AIDS in Africa if Africa spends only $165 million a year on AIDS, whereas the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimates that $2 billion to $3 billion is needed to combat the disease.

The basic question is, therefore, financing for development, which is particularly crucial today, since official development assistance (ODA) continues to drop in quality and quantity. Because of Africa's limited access to private capital markets and because of the drop in ODA, which has not been supplemented by direct foreign investments, deficiencies which the report of the Working Group recognizes, it is important that the international community deal with these basic questions. Moreover, weak domestic savings, the heavy debt burden and high tariffs all continue to limit access to markets. Therefore, it is important that urgent, bold measures be taken reverse this negative trend, particularly in the current context of double-speed globalization, whose current patterns have led to a sense of insecurity by weakening the ability of Governments to control and manage their national policies.

As the Millennium Declaration states, globalization will benefit everyone equitably only if a major new sustained effort is made to build a common future based on our shared human condition. This effort should produce policies and measures at the world scale consonant with the needs of the developing countries.

The Secretary-General's report and the Working Group's report have helped to create momentum with regard to Africa, and this should be maintained. This is why my delegation calls for a methodical follow-up on the Working Group proposals by the General Assembly and all of the bodies of the United Nations system. This follow-up work should deal, inter alia, with the six thematic areas proposed by the Group: poverty eradication, debt relief, financing for development, the fight against HIV/AIDS, the prevention of conflict and peace-building, the plight of refugees and displaced persons and, finally, the question of the coordination and rationalization of the various initiatives for Africa.

In conclusion, I wish, on behalf of my country, to support the proposals to extend the Working Group's mandate and to develop reliable criteria to assess the impact of the measures taken and the results obtained in the implementation of the relevant recommendations

of the Secretary-General. In that same spirit, my delegation is pleased that the Millennium Declaration, adopted by our heads of State and Government, contains a whole section on Africa. My delegation would suggest that in the follow-up work we take into account the recommendations on Africa adopted at the Millennium Summit.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): First, allow me to express our condolences and sympathy to the Government and the people of Singapore and the families of the deceased following the tragic Singapore Airlines accident yesterday morning in Taipei.

The issues of conflict resolution, sustained economic growth and sustainable development in Africa have been the focus of discussions in the General Assembly and its main bodies and other international organizations, such as the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO), to name but a few.

In view of the gravity of the situation, in January this year the Security Council held a special session to address the state of Africa and how to resolve the crisis, and stressed the need for the international community to resolve the African crisis in the areas of peace, development and health on an urgent basis. The Millennium Summit recognized the seriousness of the African situation and urged that remedial action be taken by the international community. In this respect, we believe that the root causes of Africa's underdevelopment and conflicts are well known and understood. The challenge is the implementation of various agreed measures to address those problems. In this context, we welcome the report of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group, contained in document A/55/45, which is now before us.

The report of the Ad Hoc Working Group identifies a number of initiatives being undertaken in the areas of conflict resolution, sustainable development and poverty eradication. It observes that while some progress may be discerned in the implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General, there are a number of problems that need to be resolved.

The first step towards addressing the African problem is to forge a strong partnership between the international community and the countries affected by the crisis. In this regard, we therefore support the call for a sustained tripartite effort by the African countries, the United Nations system and the donor community. This partnership should be aimed at the enhancement of the efforts Africa is making in the economic, social and security fields.

In the area of conflicts, which are hampering efforts to achieve progress in economic and social development in some African countries, it is important to increase support for the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the corresponding subregional organizations. These mechanisms are playing a significant role in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa. Recently, Africa also established the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa. What is needed are resources to enable these mechanisms to prepare better for the task of conflict prevention and resolution. Notwithstanding these efforts, we fully endorse the caution expressed in the Ad Hoc Working Group's report regarding the fact that the efforts undertaken by African Governments in this field should in no way relieve the Security Council of its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Tanzania supports the efforts aimed at conflict resolution in the Great Lakes region, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. We call upon the international community to support the Lusaka Agreement on the Democratic Republic of the Congo since it remains the only firm framework for a comprehensive peace in that country. In this regard, we urge that the peacekeeping force mandated by the Security Council be fully deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as soon as possible.

The international community and the regional leaders have been involved in the search for peace in Burundi through the Arusha peace process. Some progress has been made in this process following the signing of the Burundi peace accord in August this year. The peace accord, which was facilitated by President Nelson Mandela, provides a good basis for resolving the Burundi conflict. We call upon all parties to respect and implement the agreement so as to bring peace to that country.

In Angola, it is with apprehension that we bear witness to the continuing hostilities and grave humanitarian situation brought about by Jonas Savimbi and his organization, UNITA. We appeal to the Security Council and the international community to assist the Angolan Government in its efforts to restore peace and address the worsening humanitarian situation in that country.

With regard to Somalia, we welcome the agreement reached in Djibouti recently on the formation of the Government of that country. In this regard, we congratulate the Government of Djibouti for its constructive role in that process. The new Somalia will need the support and assistance of all peace-loving people, and of the international community at large.

There is a direct linkage between conflicts and the incidence of refugees and internally displaced persons. It is estimated that Africa has over 7 million people who are refugees and displaced persons. Tanzania is hosting more than 800,000 refugees, most of whom are products of the crisis in the Great Lakes region. In our previous interventions we have stressed the need for the international community to increase its support for refugees and for nations hosting refugees. Moreover, a durable solution to the refugee crisis entails the resolution of conflicts in the countries of origin, followed by the repatriation of refugees.

Concerning development assistance to Africa, the Ad Hoc Working Group proposes a number of measures in critical areas such as increasing official development assistance (ODA) and flows of foreign direct investment (FDI), and tackling the debt problem. In this context, we should like to reiterate the call on our development partners to increase ODA flows from the current average low level of about 0.25 per cent of gross national product to the agreed target of 0.7 per cent. The provision of ODA should be done in tandem with an increase in investments. Even though many African countries have undertaken structural adjustment programmes and economic reforms, the flow of FDI has been dismal. There is a need for investors to respond positively to the efforts Africa is making to create an enabling environment for foreign direct investment and economic growth.

A solution to the debt burden faced by many African countries has to be found on an urgent basis. Debt repayment drains valuable resources from the rehabilitation and construction of essential development infrastructure and programmes aimed at poverty eradication. We welcome the various debt relief measures taken by the donor community, particularly the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HPIC) Debt Initiative. However, there is a need to relax further the conditionalities attached to HIPC so as to enable more countries to qualify for funding. We further appeal to donors to increase contributions to the HIPC Trust Fund so as to respond to the increased demand for its resources in the HIPC countries. My country, in particular, is grateful to the donor community, since it is one of the few countries that has reached the decision point.

There is a need to address these issues of financial resources in a more comprehensive fashion so that a long-term solution is found for Africa. In this context, we expect that the special concerns of African countries will be taken into account at the high-level international intergovernmental conference on financing for development scheduled for 2001.

For there to be accelerated development in African countries, the international community should direct its support towards the areas of technology transfers and education. The widening technological gap and the deepening digital divide between African countries and developed countries have been major impediments to development. We therefore call on the international community to strengthen efforts to transfer technology to Africa on concessional and grant terms, including information and environmentally sound technologies.

Finally, we endorse the Working Group's proposal that the General Assembly give particular attention to the devastating HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa, and that Member States support and actively participate in the various initiatives under way in this endeavour, including those of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Mohammad Kamal (Malaysia): First and foremost, my delegation would like to convey its sympathies and condolences to the delegation, Government and people of Singapore on the tragic crash of the Singapore Airlines aircraft yesterday at Taipei. We would also like to convey to all the bereaved families in the other countries affected by the tragic accident that took the lives of their nationals.

My delegation welcomes the opportunity this morning to address this important agenda item 50, the

important item on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. Malaysia is gratified that following the report of the Secretary-General on Africa of April 1998, there has been a tremendous amount of work done by the various organs and bodies of the Organization to address this issue. We particularly welcome the establishment of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa, and congratulate the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, who served as its Chairman. We also congratulate the two Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador Kishore Mahbubani of Singapore and Ambassador Inocencio Arias of Spain, for their tireless efforts and for putting together the report of the Working Group contained in document A/55/45 following three gruelling sessions during the previous session of the General Assembly.

My delegation commends the comprehensive report of the Ad Hoc Working Group, which contains a wealth of observations and practical proposals. It is clear from the report that while much has been achieved to address the problems besetting Africa, much more still needs to be done in order to overcome the many obstacles to the effective implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General. High on the list of priorities is the need for the international community to muster the political will to continue to assist African countries in their development efforts. Clearly, there needs to be an ongoing and dynamic partnership between the international community and African countries.

Many a time, we have heard the call for good governance in Africa on the argument that responsible governance brings about political stability, which is essential for Africa as it seeks to attract external resources, including foreign direct investment. It is regrettable that Africa has continued to be besieged by numerous armed conflicts, and that perceived risks and instability only serve to push donors and investors away from Africa. We note from the Working Group's report that in spite of some progress on this front, a number of countries in Africa still lack the political will to govern responsibly and to implement accords designed to resolve conflicts. Armed conflicts only serve to harm Africa, and have resulted in more than 8 million Africans becoming refugees and internally displaced persons.

In assisting Africa we should seek ways and means to continue to strengthen the early warning capacity of the Organization to respond to conflict situations on the continent, as well as the capacities of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and subregional organizations. The crucial role of African regional and subregional organizations in the field of preventive diplomacy and the peaceful settlement of disputes cannot be overemphasized. Undoubtedly, the OAU, the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern African Development Community and the Intergovernmental Authority for Development all play important roles in this regard and must be lauded, encouraged and further assisted in their efforts.

However, while we welcome Africa's commitment and its willingness to shoulder increasing responsibility for the resolution of its own conflicts, it is important to ensure that this will not lead to an abdication by the Security Council of its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The pressing concerns regarding this Organization's involvement in Sierra Leone and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, must be appropriately and adequately addressed.

There cannot be peace without development, the two are inextricably linked. With a population of close to 800 million people, Africa, sadly, remains the world's poorest region. The continent's growth rate in 1999 was 3 per cent; it was only 2.1 per cent for the entire decade of the 1990s, well below the estimated 5 per cent gross domestic product growth rate required to prevent the number of poor people from increasing. Economic and social problems are often among the root causes of conflicts, and it remains to be seen whether the international community is up to the challenge to garner the necessary political will to address meaningfully the perennial question of sustaining and enhancing development in Africa. Poverty eradication should continue to be high on the agenda, as poverty only impedes efforts at achieving long-term peace and security. Crippling external debt, limited market access, declining share of foreign direct investment and marginalization from global capital markets owing to a perception of risks and political instability, are just some of the other factors that impede Africa's growth.

Malaysia joins the call for the international community to assist Africa in a more sustained fashion in order to bring about growth, help relieve the millions of poor people from poverty, hunger and diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, and to encourage the peoples of the affected regions in Africa to fully utilize their potential for a better future.

Clearly, Africa continues to need development assistance. It does not help matters when Africa, already marginalized from international private capital as a result of perceived risks, is further burdened by declining official development assistance. Having fallen about 24 per cent in real terms since the 1990s, official development assistance and other external resource inflows are declining at a time when Africa's needs are most pressing. Only a handful of developed countries have consistently met or exceeded the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product as agreed to at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. That is indeed regrettable, and vigorous and committed efforts must be put in place to reverse this trend.

Malaysia remains convinced that, given the complexity of the issues pertaining to Africa, they must be dealt with in a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated manner if we are to make a significant impact on the situation in Africa. In that regard, we share the view that the General Assembly should continue to be responsible for continuing efforts to monitor the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General in all their aspects, in tandem with efforts made by the other organs of this Organization, as well as other international institutions.

We believe that the progress achieved thus far by Africa must be sustained and further enhanced to reach its full potential. As other regions of the world have done, Africa must learn from the lessons of the past and must move forward to brave the challenges of the new millennium. Of course, in its present stage of development, Africa cannot do it alone. While Africa must play its part in the process, it needs, and must have, the continued assistance, understanding and commitment of the international community. Malaysia will continue to make its modest contribution in that regard.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to convey the condolences of the Algerian delegation to the delegations of Angola, the Russian Federation and Singapore on the loss of life resulting from the air disasters that took place yesterday and today.

The General Assembly's consideration of agenda item 50, which relates to follow-up to the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/871) on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, provides an opportunity to thank the President of the General Assembly and his country, Finland, for their interest in Africa, and to pay tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, who displayed special commitment to keeping Africa high on the list of priorities during his presidency. Indeed, the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa, whose report (A/55/45) and proposals we are considering today, reflects his dedication and tireless work on behalf of Africa.

The major work carried out by the Working Group is also, and above all, testimony to the high commitment of the two Vice-Chairmen, Kishore Mahbubani of Singapore and Inocencio Arias of Spain, who embody the spirit of the South-South and North-South partnership that Africa so sorely needs. We convey to them our gratitude and our deep appreciation for the work they carried out with great skill and spirit. I wish also to thank the Secretariat for its invaluable support in preparing the report and in facilitating the work of the Working Group.

The Working Group, which the General Assembly established at its fifty-fourth session, has constituted a special approach to following up the implementation of the recommendations the Secretary-General made in his April 1998 report. Indeed, it has been a unique tool for assessment and analysis.

Of course, the relatively brief time at the disposal of the Working Group and the particularly difficult context in which it was working — relating, inter alia, to the very heavy workload of the first half of 2000 — made it impossible to consider all recommendations and proved a constraint on its mandate. But despite such constraints, the Working Group did a remarkable job of fulfilling its mission. It will thus have helped keep Africa at the focal point of

the Organization's attention — which is another virtue of the work it has done.

Furthermore, the innovative formula used by the Working Group as a result of the very rich interaction between Member States and the agencies, institutions and programmes of the United Nations system deserves praise. It might also be beneficial henceforth to apply this formula to the various areas on which we will be focusing in the future and to extend it to the donor community. In this context, we believe that it might be beneficial if, instead of limiting itself to work carried out by the United Nations system for the benefit of Africa, the Working Group also considered information about what the partners are doing.

Paragraph 9 of the Working Group's report shows that discernible progress has been achieved in implementing the Secretary-General's recommendations in a wide range of areas. Nonetheless, as paragraph 12 makes clear, much remains to be done because there are a number of obstacles resulting from political, economic and social considerations at both the national and the international levels.

In fact, the main obstacle continues to be the lack of political will to make the necessary effort to take the actions that are required in support of peace and sustainable development in Africa. It is true that responsibilities are shared, but it is equally true that the international community has unfortunately not yet precisely gauged the challenges in Africa.

Paragraph 228 of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the organization rightly states:

> "Africa continues to face a range of complex and extraordinarily difficult economic, health and security challenges."

Such are the tasks and challenges faced by our continent.

It is true that the situation in Africa continues to be of the highest priority for the United Nations. In this context, the commitment of our partners, in the South, as well as the North, to Africa deserves our appreciation and encouragement. But this commitment should not be absorbed into a plethora of discussions that risk causing the international community to lose its sense of priority and of the need to translate into concrete action commitments on behalf of the continent.

My delegation would like to suggest that the General Assembly and the Working Group pay particular attention to four recommendations whose priority implementation would be a true test of the success of our work.

The first relates to the prevention of conflict and the maintenance of peace. We would like to reiterate the appeal that we have already made, here and elsewhere in other United Nations bodies, for the more consistent involvement of the international community in the global effort to preserve peace and security on the African continent. The universal character of peacekeeping operations requires all members of the international community — the States Members of the United Nations — to show greater solidarity through their consistent participation in United Nations operations in Africa. Recent developments in the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone unfortunately reflect a trend towards the regionalization of such operations in Africa, and this cannot help but have an adverse affect on Africa and, as a consequence, on international peace and security.

African States have shown their willingness to fully assume their responsibilities by taking an important part in keeping the peace on the continent, as evidenced by the most recent discussions between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which took place last week in Algiers. However, it is obvious that the requirements of such a commitment cannot be met by the means and capacities available to African countries.

The second point is the situation of post-conflict countries, for which a very special effort needs to be made, by creating conditions to avoid a resurgence of conflict during the peacekeeping phase. Among other measures, financing programmes for disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of former combatants from within the peacekeeping budget, as recommended in the Working Group's conclusions, would directly contribute to the success of such programmes. Furthermore, we are pleased to see that this essential measure is one of the recommendations contained in the Brahimi report.

My third point relates to debt relief. With regard to the external debt of African countries, the report of the Working Group stresses the drain on valuable and scarce resources caused by interest payments. This is a question of extreme — indeed, crucial — importance, and its resolution will have a decisive and definitive

impact on any serious effort to stimulate or develop the African economy.

My fourth point — and the fourth proposal in the report — relates to the ravages of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The damage caused by this pandemic in Africa now represents a challenge and a threat to the stability of many countries in the continent. The record numbers, which unfortunately reflect an alarming trend in this area, require the international community to take urgent action commensurate with the scale of the challenge. The next special session of the General Assembly on this question, to be held in June 2001, should contribute to a qualitative and significant evolution in the struggle against this pandemic. Africa, which is the region most seriously affected, places great hope on that event.

The Secretary-General's initiative, as reflected in his report (A/52/871) of April 1998, was both necessary and innovative, given the urgent need for the international community to take action to confront the challenges and needs identified in that report and because of the approach that it recommends with regard to the synergy between peace and security on the one hand and peace and development on the other. It is now up to us to try, together, to identify and develop useful guidelines for future action by the Assembly to follow-up and encourage the implementation of the relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General in order not to disappoint the many expectations of our continent.

For its part, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has adopted a vision based on the close relationship between peace, security and development. The process of the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa advocates the same approach as the Secretary-General in his 1998 report. We should therefore consider those initiatives as being mutually complementary. Furthermore, it is extremely important for the OAU to be officially invited to contribute to the Working Group by communicating and interacting with it.

One year after the Working Group was created, we must jointly identify and agree on useful future activities on the part of the General Assembly to follow-up the implementation of the relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General. In this context, Algeria believes that the mandate of the Working Group should be renewed under the authority of the President of the General Assembly. Future action for the Working Group, as well as specific topics on which it should focus, could be the subject of consultations and agreement among Member States, facilitated by the President of the General Assembly. We believe that we should also involve the two Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group in this activity.

The Working Group, as proposed in its report, should establish thematic working groups, coordinated by Member States, to review in greater depth questions that were not analysed sufficiently during the last session.

One important aspect of the follow-up to the implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations has to do with the evaluation tools that the Working Group will need to examine. It would be useful for one of the thematic subgroups to focus on the definition of parameters and indicators to help it measure the progress achieved. Likewise, the complementarity between the various organs of the Organization, be it the Security Council or the Economic and Social Council, is also of the greatest importance. Greater coordination is needed to improve consistency in this regard.

As the Working Group has requested, it would be desirable for the Assembly to receive periodically all interim reports issued by the Secretary-General on follow-up to the implementation of the recommendations in his report.

Following the adoption of the Millennium Declaration at the unique and historic Summit of world leaders, we express the wish that the specific commitments taken in support of Africa will not simply remain mere declarations of intent, without action.

Finally, I pay special tribute to our partners in Africa, both in the South and the North, and especially to the European Union, whose participation in the Working Group has been continuous, useful and top-notch.

My delegation hopes that future discussions will enable other partners, within and outside the United Nations, to show their interest in and attention to African concerns.

Mr. Chitharanjan (India): We convey our heartfelt condolences and sympathy to Singapore and

to all of the bereaved families affected by the tragic disaster yesterday of Singapore Airlines.

I begin by congratulating the Permanent Representatives of Singapore and Spain, whose dedication and commitment to the work of the most important Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group of the General Assembly led to the successful adoption of its report by consensus. We support the extension of its mandate and look forward to continued active and constructive participation in its work, which we hope will result in concrete action to effectively support the efforts of the African countries themselves directed towards economic growth, prosperity and the well-being of their peoples.

Africa's problems are not unique. They are not problems because they are African. They are problems that have bedevilled countries in similar situations, in Europe and elsewhere, many times before. The solutions to these problems, therefore, have to be the same as were found for Europe after 1945 — namely, aid, development, trade and cooperation. The crucial difference is that, while a devastated Europe received a generous and sustained infusion of capital under the Marshall plan, resurgent Africa has seen prospects for its development and growth denied by a paucity of financial resources. The totality of this challenge needs to be addressed comprehensively, effectively and urgently.

We are satisfied that the Millennium Declaration decided to support the consolidation of democracy in Africa and to assist African countries in their struggle for lasting peace, poverty eradication and sustainable development. The resolve of our leaders, shown in paragraph 27 of the Millennium Declaration, is clear; the international community's approach should be guided by the spirit of learning from Africa, to help itself by helping Africa and not to preach the "perceived wisdom" which seeks to guide development cooperation today. Conditionalities of any sort would only worsen the situation.

We strongly believe that Africa's efforts towards eradicating poverty are predicated on the twin factors of sustained economic growth and external financing. According to the publication *World Economic Situation and Prospects for 2000*, African economies grew by 3 per cent in 1999, recording a marginal increase over the 2.8 per cent economic growth rate of 1998. Notwithstanding this improvement, economic growth over the last decade in Africa has been neither strong enough nor sustained enough to increase per capita income and to achieve a substantial and sustained reduction in poverty levels. It has been estimated that 44 per cent of Africans in the continent as a whole and 51 per cent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa live in absolute poverty. Annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of between 7 per cent and 8 per cent would be required to halve poverty by 2015. Without growth there cannot be any increase in household or government spending, in private or public capital formation, in health or social welfare.

The question before us, therefore, is how to achieve these growth rates. Another report (A/55/350) submitted to this Millennium Assembly has estimated that an annual investment of 30 per cent to 40 per cent of GDP is required. With a current domestic saving rate of around 18 per cent, it is clear that at least 22 per cent of Africa's GDP should be provided annually by required external resources. In July this year the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in its report entitled *Capital Flows and Growth in Africa*, said that the only feasible way to end the aid dependence of Africa is to launch a massive aid programme to sustained rapid growth for a sufficiently long period. It estimated that a doubling of aid flow for sub-Saharan Africa of $22 billion a year would amount to no more than an increase of five United States cents to every hundred dollars of consumer spending in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries — surely not big numbers.

The issue of debt cancellation deserves special consideration. High ratios of external debt to GDP and a high debt service ratio continue to characterize several African countries. Clearly, deteriorating social spending is largely due to rising claims of interest payments on public debt. In many African countries, per capita external debt is twice the yearly income. Africa's debt has increased from $344 billion in 1997 to $359 billion in 1999, debt service as a percentage of export of goods and services has been continuously increasing, from 21.3 per cent in 1997 to 28.7 per cent in 1998 and to 30 per cent last year.

According to almost all measures, despite the high media-visibility debt-relief initiatives, the burden of African countries has been worsening. Many of them have been trapped in a debt cycle whereby new aid is given to service existing debt stock. For sub-

Saharan Africa as a whole, arrears on interest payments on long-term debt accumulated from 1989 to 1998 are over $13 billion, or 14 per cent of the current account deficit. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimates that 19,000 children die every day in sub-Saharan Africa because money has to be spent on debt repayments and debt-servicing rather than basic health care. This is clearly unacceptable. Additional resources, apart from official development assistance (ODA), are urgently required to finance fully the envisaged debt cancellation.

We are happy that the international conference on financing for development will focus on issues related to African development. We would like to make only three points.

First, on the issue of domestic mobilization of resources, in these subsistence-level economies, instead of stressing domestic resource mobilization, the international community should concentrate on international actions to meet the 22 per cent financing gap.

Secondly, it is abundantly clear that the overall increase in private capital flows to developing countries has largely bypassed Africa. In 1999, Africa attracted only $8.6 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) portfolio, of the total $192 billion invested in all the developing countries. This underlines the need for capital exporting countries to eliminate any restrictions, formal or informal, on investments in African countries.

Thirdly, there is the most important issue of the return of capital that has been removed from these countries and squirrelled away. Capital flight remains pervasive; it was estimated to be approximately equal to Africa's external debt stock at the end of 1990s, at around $350 billion. The situation is complicated by the unwillingness of the foreign Governments in whose banks lies the preponderant portion of these massive amounts to make efforts to return this capital to those to whom it rightly belongs — the people of Africa. Africa urgently and desperately needs these funds, not only for development, but also to further its valiant efforts to staunch corruption and ensure that the bribes of a corrupt international economic system do not impair the development of the honest people of Africa. Can we take effective steps to address this issue?

Two years ago, the Secretary-General emphasised the importance of export-led growth for Africa. It is claimed by some that economic growth in 1999 was essentially export-led and that gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2000 is expected to increase to 4.2 per cent, largely due to an anticipated increase in the value of exports to 11.5 per cent this year. However, African countries are basically primary produce exporters that have suffered sharp deteriorations in the terms of trade. Tariff peaks and tariff escalation, as well as agricultural support policies and restrictive agricultural safeguards of Organization for Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, severely impede the development of export-oriented growth of many African countries. After all, how can a farmer in Africa effectively compete with his Western counterpart when the latter received an average annual subsidy of $25,000 in 1996 and when the OECD countries spend the equivalent of more than Africa's total GDP to subsidize their farmers? In fact, it has been variously estimated that, as a result of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, Africa stands to lose up to $1.2 billion every year. Effective action must be taken to redress this situation.

I have a few points of detail on the report of the Working Group. We strongly suggest, with regard to paragraph 9 (d), on the impact of refugees, that the role of the United Nations Development Programme in this, and indeed other areas, must be guided by the principles of operational activities, and must not be a strain on its primary role — assisting developing countries in their national development priorities.

Furthermore, we note from paragraph 17 that

> "tied aid has reduced the effectiveness and amount of aid available for use within the recipient countries."

We would, of course, have hoped that the Assembly would go beyond this, to ask for a complete untying of aid as the single most important factor in enhancing the effectiveness of aid. Tied aid makes a mockery of the recent talk of giving recipients a bigger stake in making a success of aid projects — letting them own them, in the jargon, or as a donor was recently heard to say in an African country, "Yes, of course, they must own the projects. We will force them to do it. However, our people back home would be more comfortable if our national was in charge, since vast amounts of taxpayers' money are being spent. If they do not like it, they can get their money elsewhere." This must cease.

Finally, we should eschew the propensity to look at Africa as a homogenous entity with the same problems in all its countries. Obviously, there can be no universal blueprint, and policies have to be tailored by each recipient country to meet its specific structural and economic needs. Our role should be to assist, where we can make a difference, in the actual implementation of the choices made by the African countries themselves.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): Norway welcomes the opportunity once again to discuss the follow-up of the important report (A/52/871) of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, which in April 1998 was submitted to the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Regrettably, there are still several serious conflicts in Africa, and the continent continues to lag behind the rest of the world in economic and social development. According to a United Nations report to the Economic and Social Council session this summer, Africa's economy in 1999 grew by an estimated 3.2 per cent, and during the last decade the continent's annual average growth was only 2.1 per cent, while the yearly population increase was 2.8 per cent. This means that economic growth is not keeping pace with the growth in population and that most African countries are far behind the 7 per cent annual growth rate required to reduce poverty by half by 2015. The slow growth of the African economy is one of the main obstacles to achieving sustainable development and improving the living conditions of the majority of the African people.

Armed conflicts are a major reason for the slow economic growth in a large number of African countries. Here we all have a responsibility, as the Secretary-General pointed out in his report two years ago. There is therefore an urgent need for a stronger commitment both from the African countries and their leaders and from the United Nations and the international community at large. Together we need to take decisive steps to prevent and resolve such conflicts.

Norway believes that speedy and efficient implementation of the recommendations in the report (A/55/305) of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, the so-called Brahimi report, would constitute one such step. We also believe it is important to take further steps to strengthen the mechanisms for cooperation in peacekeeping and peace-building between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), as well as with African subregional organizations.

Norway will continue its efforts to strengthen the United Nations capacity for peacekeeping and conflict prevention, and to support the Trust Fund for Preventive Action. We will also continue our support for the OAU and its Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

We note with appreciation that important progress has recently been made with regard to resolving some of the ongoing conflicts in Africa. It is, however, important that such progress be followed up with the necessary commitment and political will by the political leaders concerned to implement peace accords and other measures required to ensure that the expectations of peace and reconciliation are attained. Only then may the international community be able to provide the necessary resources to create a basis for sustainable development.

Poverty is both a cause and an effect of conflicts and is endemic to many parts of Africa. Poverty eradication must therefore be one of our main priorities in the work for durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. The ongoing efforts in many countries to develop their own strategies for poverty reduction should be actively supported. In this context, it is also important to ensure proper coordination between the Bretton Woods institutions and the relevant United Nations agencies in order to streamline their activities and create maximum complementarity and synergy.

Furthermore, bilateral donors should ensure that their activities are well coordinated with the work of the multilateral institutions and within an overall framework defined by the recipient countries themselves. It is also important that we stand by our commitments as far as development assistance is concerned. The Norwegian Government is determined to go beyond the current 0.9 per cent of our gross national product devoted to official development assistance to reach 1 per cent. We are also committed to giving priority in our development cooperation to Africa. In order to ensure the best possible international coordination, we shall increase significantly our development assistance allocated through the United Nations agencies. Norway is

already by far the largest per capita contributor to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and we shall further expand our cooperation with UNDP both for poverty reduction and in relation to good governance and post-conflict management. Norway will also continue to give high priority to the ongoing work to alleviate the heavy debt burden of many African countries. We encourage all creditor countries to seek ways to give the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative a new start.

Health is an essential factor for development. It is a tragic fact that more than 23 million Africans today live with HIV/AIDS, and the economies of many African countries are seriously threatened by the epidemic. If unchecked, it is estimated that HIV/AIDS over the next 20 years may reduce the economies of sub-Saharan Africa by a fourth. In some of the hard-hit countries, life expectancy has already been reduced by as much as 20 years. HIV/AIDS now constitutes one of the most serious threats to sustainable development in Africa. The Norwegian Government has therefore decided to double the funding for HIV/AIDS programmes and to give priority to this issue in our cooperation with all our development partners. We also look forward to the upcoming United Nations special session scheduled for next June to take stock and agree on new and strengthened action in this field.

Norway will also increase significantly its contribution to combat tuberculosis and other preventable diseases prevalent in many parts of Africa. We have recently pledged $110 million to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization in order to save and protect the health of some 25 million poor children who annually fail to receive immunization against easily preventable diseases. We believe this to be a cost-effective tool in the fight against poverty.

Economic growth and sustainable development will not be possible without investments. In order to achieve a gross domestic product growth rate of 7 per cent per annum, it is estimated that sub-Saharan Africa will require an investment rate of 40 per cent compared to the current rate of 17 per cent. This will be possible only through the much more active involvement of the private sector. For this reason, Norway, in cooperation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, has decided to invite all least developed countries to a conference in Oslo next January to discuss the role of the private sector in our war against poverty.

It should, however, be underlined that investments and economic growth do not occur in a vacuum. Peace and stability are a basic prerequisite for potential investors. There is also a need for transparent and accountable Governments and for the security of personal freedom and private property — in short, for good governance and respect for human rights. This is where many African countries so far have not fulfilled their obligations. The need for good governance is our common challenge — for the African countries themselves and for the international community.

It is therefore important that we all make a renewed, coordinated and sustained effort to promote peace and development on the African continent. Conflict prevention and conflict resolution should go hand in hand with humanitarian aid and development efforts. We must also deal with the root causes of the conflicts and not just the symptoms. Effective crisis management must therefore include promoting long-term and sustainable development, combating poverty and relieving poor countries of their unsustainable debt burden, as well as promoting democratic and economic reforms.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to participate in the discussion on this item in order to support the work and recommendations submitted to the Assembly by the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa.

We should like to express our gratitude to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, the Foreign Minister of Namibia, and to the Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, the Ambassadors of Spain and Singapore, for the excellent manner in which they conducted the deliberations, for the open dialogue they promoted and for their skill in guiding our work.

The goal of durable peace in Africa is the profound aspiration of all members of the international community, especially the peoples of Africa themselves, who today are suffering the effects of conflict on a daily basis. We must consider the work of the Working Group as a contribution to this aspiration to peace in Africa because it has allowed us to focus on the causes of conflict, to discuss relief for the populations and to consider how we should all act in order to produce the best possible outcome.

I should like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the initiatives outlined in the report of the Working Group and to link them to recent developments in support of peace and development in Africa.

First are the pan-African initiatives. We welcome with great satisfaction two recent African initiatives that demonstrate the determination of African countries to overcome adverse conditions and to restore peace to the continent. One was the decision to establish the African Economic Community, adopted by the heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity last July as a platform to build a better future and a foundation of unity among its diverse peoples. The other was the plan of action adopted in Abuja in May this year at the African Ministerial Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa. It deserves the broadest possible international support.

Secondly, there are the measures taken within the United Nations system. The United Nations organs have been cooperating with the countries of Africa in various ways that have been highlighted in the presentations made by various agencies to the Working Group. They are also reflected in the document on agreed conclusions issued last year by the Economic and Social Council. We are pleased that the high-level segment of the Council's substantive session next year will be devoted specifically to the development of Africa.

Let me also highlight the decision of the Secretary-General taken in April 2000 to establish a task force between United Nations agencies, headed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), to respond to the problems of food security and agricultural development in the Horn of Africa where these factors have had a negative bearing on peace and security.

We also believe that the significance given in the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group to measures on behalf of post-conflict countries is very appropriate. Consequently, we support the recommendation that the General Assembly ask the Economic and Social Council to establish a special consultative group to review the economic needs of these countries in order to provide them with support programmes to help them recover successfully. The needs of these countries are very special, and their institutions are still very fragile. Receiving a critical mass of resources on a timely basis could give them the definitive thrust that would make it possible for them to overcome their difficulties.

We also applaud that on 4 September, under the presidency of Mali, the Security Council held a meeting involving the heads of State and Government of its members in order to discuss promoting peace on the African continent. We hope to show our firm support for this idea during our participation on the Council for the next two years starting on 1 January 2001.

Thirdly, there are measures on foreign debt and international trade. The disproportionate weight of external debt continues to be one of the main concerns of the African countries. It is obvious that the highly indebted poor countries should be accorded special attention on the part of their creditors and the international financial institutions in order to attempt to cancel their debt.

Another series of measures would apply to countries that cannot benefit from the current initiatives as a way of relieving their debt. And yet another category of measures would seek to benefit middle-income debtor countries that are interested in avoiding long-term debt sustainability problems.

When it comes to international trade and investments, we are pleased to note the results of the very important Africa-Europe Summit held in Cairo this year, as well as the signing of the Cotonou Agreement last June that will guide commercial cooperation and economic links among the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States and the European Union.

Fourthly and finally is the matter of the future work of the Ad Hoc Working Group. We believe that the way that this Group has done its work is good, but we believe that improvements would be possible. We would have preferred to have more time to look at some other aspects having to do with causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa — for instance, measures to support countries that have received many refugees or those that have to respond to the urgent needs of internally displaced persons.

We would therefore like to recommend that the mandate of the Ad Hoc Working Group be extended so that it may continue evaluating the implementation of

the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report on Africa of 1998. Its work should help the preparations for the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council next year and the final evaluation in 2002 of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s initiative.

Mr. Al-Awdi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives my delegation pleasure to participate in the discussion of the item on the "Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa". We in Kuwait believe that our friends in the African continent deserve our support here at the United Nations, in parallel to our constant support in the field.

My delegation has followed the serious discussions in the United Nations on African issues since 1997 within the Security Council and since 1998 in the General Assembly when this item was included in the agenda of the Assembly. We have been advocating a very clear fact — that this concern and all positive proposals need to be sustainable and implementable in the field so that they can alleviate the suffering of our brethren on the African continent. My delegation believes that chapter VII of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) on the African continent would be the last theoretical measure that we can adopt here at the United Nations. The only way to confirm the credibility of the United Nations and the keenness of its members to achieve stability in the continent is the adoption of implementable and practical measures that would realize objectives such as the elimination of poverty as well as other social problems in Africa.

Such problems play an important role in fomenting conflicts in Africa. My delegation has actively followed the work of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict in Africa. In this respect, we cannot fail to pay tribute to the laudable efforts of the two Vice-Chairmen of the Group, Ambassador Mahbubani of Singapore and Ambassador Arias of Spain, and their Mission staff in the highly organized and transparent way in which they conducted the work of this Working Group.

My delegation would like to express its full support for most of the items in the report of this Working Group, including the extension of its mandate for the coming session. After reviewing the work of the Working Group and all the reports of the United Nations on the causes of conflict in Africa, we in Kuwait have reached some primary convictions of which we highlight the following:

First, we would like to emphasize the importance of entrusting the follow-up for all the political and development efforts in the African continent to one organ inside the United Nations and to coordinate international efforts inside and outside the United Nations system in order to guarantee best use of the efforts and assistance provided to African States in different fields.

Secondly, the role of the African States is considered a critical and decisive factor in realizing the viable and durable stability in the African continent. In this regard, we welcome the convening of an African ministerial conference on security, stability, development and cooperation in Africa, which would be a way to convince the world that the African continent is seriously working to create favourable and stable circumstances for the development process.

Thirdly, we share the view in the Report of the Working Group stating that the political will for the solution of the African question must be provided by three main parties: the African States, the United Nations and the donor countries.

Fourthly, we would like to emphasize concentrating on the development of the human resources in Africa and to encourage those good Africans, who as we in Kuwait know very well, are capable of rising up to the challenges on the continent.

Fifthly, debt burden relief for African countries is vital in assisting the continent to reinvest any disbursements and assistance in the development domain.

Sixthly, we must steer away from complicated development programmes that are not commensurate with actual reality in Africa. Such plans would require huge financial resources. We must otherwise concentrate on implementing easy plans that aim at eliminating poverty, promoting education and increasing awareness of the concepts of peace and law.

Kuwait has always been keen in its foreign policy on speaking and moving within its actual capacity to assist. Development assistance to friendly countries is considered one of the pillars of Kuwaiti foreign policy, which we implement in good will and within the framework of implementing South-South cooperation.

This was made clear by the 1991 initiative of His Royal Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who wrote off the interest accrued on least developed countries' debts, including African countries, in addition to assistance provided by the Kuwaiti fund for Arab economic development, which provides low-interest loans to African countries.

A cursory look at the report of the Kuwait fund for the year 2000 shows the volume of Kuwaiti development assistance through the fund to countries in East, Central, West and southern Africa until 1999. This assistance by Kuwait amounted to 17 per cent of the total world development assistance to various countries of the world. Six hundred and sixty-two extremely low interest loans were given to African States, totalling in value $1,000,600,000.

We hope that the coming years will not find us talking about African issues as a bad example of the gloomy realities prevailing in our world, or to give credence to the voice of doom preaching the uselessness and inefficiency of the United Nations. We must take it upon ourselves to make our approach to settle African problems a positive example to be emulated in the future. It should underscore the ability of the United Nations and its Member States to face up to the challenges of the new century.

Mr. Shahid (Bangladesh): Bangladesh participates in this debate with a great sense of pride and commitment: pride because of the indomitable spirit of the African people, which has always energized us; commitment because we believe in the cause of peace and development in Africa.

It is from this perspective that Bangladesh wholeheartedly welcomes the report of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa. We note in particular and with appreciation the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report in document A/52/871. We believe that the recommendations of the Secretary-General are to be pursued further, both within Africa and by the international community at large, with a view to eliminating the roots of conflict through a variety of sustained economic and social measures.

Bangladesh welcomes the initiatives taken by the Security Council with regard to Africa and believes that a comprehensive response to Africa's complex and interrelated security and development challenges is needed. We urge the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies, regional organizations, the international financial institutions and Member States to consider the recommendations of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group. We also call upon them to take appropriate actions of their own. We strongly believe that these recommendations can give a new momentum to peace and development in Africa.

We fully share the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report that the prevention of conflict begins and ends with the promotion of human security and human development. As in other places, conflicts in Africa have their roots in social discrimination, economic deprivation and lack of accountability in the use of political power. At the same time, we believe that the colonial legacy and its continuation in different forms and manifestations are still at work, preventing social and political assimilation and equitable distribution of resources, which foments tensions and conflicts within and among nations. There is little justification for lamenting the human and material loss in the conflicts in Africa and elsewhere when political divisions in every society are feeding today's violence. Prevention is always better than cure. The Secretary-General has already reaffirmed this idea in the context of the African situation. We share this conviction and, therefore, support his suggestion that the international community should encourage the concerned Governments to seek political solutions to conflict situations by working through special mediators and commissioners.

We find useful the suggestions contained in part IV of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group for addressing the overall mechanism and frameworks to ensure peace, security and development in Africa. The report outlines the areas in which action is to be taken at the national and international level. We believe that no domestic efforts can be successful in the developing countries, in Africa in particular, unless these are matched equally by international support. In this context, my delegation fully supports the recommendation made in the report that calls for cancellation on a once-and-for-all basis, where appropriate, of the debt of the least developed African countries, including those emerging from conflicts. My delegation shares the concern expressed in the report on the inadequacy of contributions to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative Trust

Fund and calls upon the donor countries to the HIPC Trust Fund to make their contributions available. My delegation also calls upon creditor countries to make a firm commitment to take action to write off the HIPC debt in a timely way, consistent with the urgent need for poverty eradication and enhanced economic growth in Africa.

Bangladesh's commitment to the well-being of our brothers and sisters in Africa is rooted in a number of compelling factors. Bangladesh has been a major contributor in almost all United Nations peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts on the African continent. I would also like to mention that, under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, the participation of Bangladesh in United Nations peacekeeping operations has increased manifold. We have together pursued a similar line of struggle for our independence and still share similar values of life and outlooks on the contemporary global situation. On the economic front, most of the African countries are least developed countries, the group of which Bangladesh has the honour to coordinate. We therefore share common experience and common goals in our struggle to foster a stable social order, economic development and political independence to make life meaningful for our people. Let me reaffirm our commitment to see a conflict-free Africa contributing to global peace, security and development in a meaningful way.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): My first word, on behalf of my delegation, must be one of sympathy and condolence to the Government and people of Singapore at the tragic loss of life in the Singapore Airlines crash yesterday.

Reverting to the item under discussion, I would like, at the outset, to express our appreciation to Ambassador Kishore Mahbubani of Singapore and Ambassador Arias of Spain, the two Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa for effectively presenting the deliberations of the Working Group and providing us with an excellent report.

We would also like to associate ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The challenges faced by Africa are well known. The objectives of achieving peace and prosperity in Africa have been on the priority list of the United Nations and the international community for over a decade. The number of programmes of action adopted on Africa is perhaps higher than the number of such programmes adopted for any other region of the world. Yet, the overall situation of the African continent has not improved over the last two decades. Poverty, disease, famine, lack of human resource development, external debt burden, conflict and strife remain the major obstacles to development in Africa.

These are fundamental challenges but not insurmountable ones. The maladies of underdevelopment are not peculiar to Africa. Many regions of the world have overcome these difficulties and so can Africa. It is encouraging to know that some progress has been made in the implementation of the recommendations made in the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/871), which was released in April 1998. In this context, the launching of the African Ministerial Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa within the framework of the Organization of African Unity is a laudable effort initiated by the countries of the region.

The international community must lend its full support to regional and national efforts for the achievement of the twin goals of peace and development. Africa alone cannot meet these challenges, in fact no region or nation can do so on its own. We need to assist Africa in addressing the root causes of conflicts. This requires a concerted international effort at two levels. In the first instance, there is a need to focus on the underlying political and security aspects of instability in that continent. In parallel, economic and social problems afflicting parts of Africa need to be tackled through a comprehensive assistance programme with adequate resources. But assistance loses its value, both real and moral, if it is motivated by conditionalities or political considerations. Neither peace nor development should be held hostage to ransom.

Pakistan has consistently supported United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa. We have participated on a large scale in these operations. Our military and civilian personnel have been part of United Nations operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Namibia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Western Sahara. We have a binding commitment to our partnership with Africa. Like in the past, Pakistan will also continue to lend its moral and material support to the development efforts of African countries. Our

Technical Assistance Programme for Africa is an ongoing process of training young professionals in diverse fields. As soon as the South Institute of Information Technology is established, we will be in a position to offer special training facilities in informational technology for students from Africa.

We are all committed to the cause of the development of Africa. Despite this commitment, one of the major obstacles to the effective implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General has been identified as the lack of political will. We have to re-galvanize our efforts and rededicate ourselves to bringing this continent out of the quagmire of poverty and underdevelopment.

Without enhanced official development assistance, increased investment, a durable solution of the external debt burden, market access to products and services from the African region, integration of the African countries into the global economy, efforts for the achievement of the goals of durable peace and sustainable development are not likely to make any impact.

Human resource development remains a major challenge for African countries. Special programmes should be launched for capacity-building, as well as for promoting education and literacy. The international community should strengthen efforts to transfer technology to Africa on concessional and preferential terms.

The Working Group has provided us with a number of important action-oriented recommendations to achieve the twin goals of peace and development in Africa. The international community, particularly the United Nations system, should take all necessary measures to implement the proposals contained in the report.

We believe that the high-level segment of the 2001 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council devoted to the development of Africa could significantly contribute to reinvigorating the United Nations role and assistance for the development efforts of the African countries.

African people have suffered for a long time. Challenges faced by Africa are colossal. We genuinely need to launch global action, not rhetoric, to ensure that the internationally agreed goals for Africa are achieved over a specified time-frame. Words should be turned into deeds. Otherwise, the suffering of Africa will continue unabated.

The international community must launch a concerted effort to promote peace and sustainable development in the continent of Africa. This is our moral obligation and political responsibility. Let us honour this commitment to our African partners.

Mr. Mangueira (Angola): I would like to express our condolences to Singapore on the tragic crash of the Singapore Airlines aircraft. I would also like to thank all our friends and colleagues who have conveyed their condolences to us today on the tragic crash in Angola in which 48 people died.

On behalf of the Angolan delegation, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Kishore Mahbubani on his presentation of the report of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa. Angola was one of the countries that actively participated in the last session of the Working Group, and therefore could not but participate in today's debate on this important issue.

In our opinion, the main goal of the Working Group is to seek modalities for further action to prevent conflicts in Africa in order to promote peace, security and economic growth in that part of the world. Our delegation therefore finds the present report to be an acceptable document that reflects the compromise reached by States during the last session and contains useful proposals towards reaching the goals I have just mentioned.

One of the tasks before the international community is to follow up the recommendations and decisions taken on different issues. The report notes that many recommendations have been made by the international community in such fields as peacekeeping, finance, debt, social development, AIDS and human capacity. Unfortunately, the results of those recommendations and decisions do not cover all the issues that African States expected would be addressed. This is due, among other things, to the absence of an effective mechanism to implement and coordinate actions.

In our view, one of the most important tasks of the Working Group is to draw more attention to the question of how to strengthen at all levels the mechanism to implement decisions in order to avoid a

gap between decisions and actions taken. We understand well the moral character of the recommendations, but we cannot let their political force be lost because of relationships between countries. The situation in Africa would have changed for the better if there had been active participation by weapon-producing countries and the Bretton Woods institutions in the meetings of the Working Group, and if Member States had shown greater willingness to implement and respect the decisions taken collectively by the international community.

In that regard, allow me to give one concrete example. The Security Council has adopted resolutions to put an end to the Angolan conflict, namely, resolutions 864 (1993), 1127 (1997), 1173 (1998) and, more recently, resolution 1295 (2000). Had those resolutions been fully implemented by some concerned States and supervised more effectively, life could have been made better for all Angolans throughout the country. We can find similar situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone and other countries in Africa. It is not only important to adopt good resolutions, but also to reinforce the implementation mechanism for those decisions — including through the use of sanctions — in order to be more effective not only in peacekeeping and peace-building processes, but also in other fields.

Of course, a country like Angola, which spends more than half of its gross domestic product on war and security matters, meets with serious difficulties in sustaining its economy and developing programmes to face its grave humanitarian situation and eradicate poverty. This means that there is a direct linkage between peace, security and sustainable development.

The development of Africa covers all areas of social life, including politics, economics, social welfare, education, peace and stability. Among other things, African States need financial resources to reach that development. The report of the Working Group notes that the total resources allocated to development assistance for African countries has been decreasing since the early 1990s. It is necessary to find a way to reverse that trend so that African countries can benefit more from foreign debt investment destined for public health, developing economic structures, building human resource capacity, education, poverty eradication, and so on.

In our view, the report does not sufficiently address the role of such regional and subregional African organizations as the Organization of African Unity, the African Economic Community, the Southern African Development Community, the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States in the development process and in eliminating the causes of conflicts in Africa. I think these organizations play an important role in this matter, especially in the areas of peace, settling disputes among Member States and creating conditions for strengthening regional cooperation with a view to a single African economic market. It is therefore necessary that the Working Group emphasize the participation of all African organizations, each at its own level and within its own region.

We are convinced that internal efforts have to be made by African Governments to allow for the participation of civil society in State affairs through its elected representatives, democratic political regimes, the private sector, investments, non-governmental organizations, trade unions and other organizations. Those efforts should also seek to create a culture of transparency, accountability and peace. The rational combination of domestic and international efforts is one of the keys to finding a successful way of promoting durable peace and sustainable development.

Finally, I would like to express my hope that there be more participation by all concerned parties at the next session of the Working Group in order that the recommendations that have been adopted will translate into actions and not be mere words.

Mr. Absi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, I commend United Nations efforts to address the problems of the African continent. I thank the Secretary-General for his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871).

Africa continues to face obstacles that hamper its development process. These include local and regional armed conflicts, growing indebtedness, rampant poverty, scarcity of financial resources, and the spread of dangerous diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria. The situation is exacerbated by Africa's inability to reap the benefits of peaceful technologies; this has had

a negative effect on Africa's inclusion in economic progress, especially at the international level.

Despite the key role that the United Nations has played in Africa in the past, we consider that much remains to be done. There must be a concerted regional and international effort to promote African resources and capabilities so that the continent can take its proper place in the world economic and political arena. To attain that goal, and if we are to arrive at a new system that would help in resolving conflicts peacefully and through negotiations, and in accordance with the principles of the Charter and international law, there must be political will at the local level, accompanied by broader political will at the regional and international levels. This must be accompanied by strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). In that context, we stress how important it is to consider the recommendations of the report (A/55/305) of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations chaired by Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi if we are to put an end to the destructive conflicts that beset the African continent and to set up a rapid reaction force to contain such conflicts in ways consistent with the specific characteristics of each conflict.

We are convinced that developed countries and international and regional development institutions have a role to play in providing both official and unofficial assistance, in the form of loans and grants, to African countries with a view to eliminating their external debt, especially the debt of the least developed ones, helping their economies and improving the level of investment. This requires that the developed world's markets be opened to products from developing countries.

His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, the head of State of the United Arab Emirates, is convinced that there can be a bright future for Africa and for all mankind. In the light of the historical and cultural links between the United Arab Emirates and Africa, our State has worked to engage in economic, social and cultural cooperation with many African countries. The United Arab Emirates participates in numerous programmes providing support and humanitarian and development assistance, both through official channels including the United Nations Development Programme and regional funds, and through public-sector projects and public-sector organizations such as Red Crescent societies.

The delegation of the United Arab Emirates hopes that, with the assistance of the international community, African countries will succeed in overcoming the difficult obstacles and challenges that beset them so that they can take their proper place in the international arena and meet their peoples' aspirations for peace, security, stability and development.

Mr. Mmualefe (Botswana): The report of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa, contained in document A/55/45, provides the General Assembly with proposals on how to move forward in a concrete manner on recommendations made by the Secretary-General on this very important issue.

In our view, the Working Group must be commended for discharging the initial phase of its task of monitoring the implementation both of the Secretary-General's proposals and of those which emerged from the 1999 coordination segment of the Economic and Social Council. At this juncture, my delegation wishes to commend the Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, the representatives of Singapore and of Spain, for their leadership and their commitment to the process.

It is clear that the problems of underdevelopment and poverty afflicting many African countries are linked to both domestic and international factors and require holistic treatment if real and sustainable solutions are to be found. Despite unremitting efforts by African countries to lift themselves out of difficulties and crises, only partial success has been achieved. This, however, is no surprise, because the underlying factors that influence growth, development and peace have not yet been adequately addressed. Poverty is one such factor which causes a loss of human potential and which leads to the destabilization of societies. There is, therefore, a pressing necessity for coordinated, cross-sectoral efforts to eradicate poverty.

The Working Group wisely limited its focus to three additional areas: debt relief, HIV/AIDS and support to countries in post-conflict situations. There is no doubt that these are very important issues in the context of African development. In fact, many intergovernmental conferences, notably the World Summit for Social Development, have identified these

issues as critical and urgent. Unfortunately, implementation still lags behind.

It is now widely recognized that the full engagement of civil society organizations and the private sector is vital if the goals set out in the report, as well as those elaborated under the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa, are to be realized.

The task before this Organization will be a long-drawn-out and arduous one. African countries are willing to meet their end of the bargain, as was made clear at the recent Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit, as well as the Africa-Europe Summit, during which African Governments committed themselves to promoting an environment conducive to development. What is required now are consolidated efforts by us all to support the development of Africa. These efforts should build upon initiatives already undertaken by African countries for conflict resolution. In this regard, we wish to highlight the important role played by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), supported by the OAU, in dealing with conflict situations in their subregions.

The United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and our bilateral donors should aim at coordinated approaches which will have an impact on communities across the African continent. It is evident that close monitoring and clear target-setting have to be undertaken if we are to continue to benefit from an objective assessment of progress on the ground. That is why we strongly believe that the Working Group should continue with its mandate of monitoring progress. In our opinion, the continuation of the Working Group would allow the General Assembly to examine other areas outside the mandate of the Working Group and also make room for the inclusion of emerging issues.

In conclusion, the delegation of Botswana appreciates the renewed focus on Africa by the United Nations. The Millennium Summit pronounced itself strongly on African issues, and we hope that this pronouncement will also find expression in the outcome of the forthcoming high-level international intergovernmental event on financing for development.

Mr. Cappagli (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like first to express the gratitude of the delegation of Argentina to the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa, Foreign Minister Gurirab of Namibia, and the two Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador Mahbubani of Singapore and Ambassador Arias of Spain, for their hard work during the three sessions of the Working Group this year and for the complete and well-balanced report submitted for the Assembly's consideration.

We agree with the fundamental premise of the report regarding the relationship between peace and development. In order to achieve lasting peace in Africa, minimum conditions for development must be created. The majority of African Governments are making enormous efforts to resolve ongoing disputes in a peaceful manner, strengthen their democratic institutions, promote human rights and reform their economies. Those tasks, which are being carried out by Africans themselves, require the support of the international community.

With regard to armed conflict, we believe it essential to adopt an integrated strategy that incorporates elements of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building. Close and constant cooperation and a substantive exchange of information between the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the African subregional organizations will be indispensable at every stage. Clearly, the OAU has a relevant role to play in resolving African conflicts, and we believe that Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter is an important instrument in this respect. However, this in no way exempts the Security Council from its main responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. On the contrary, following the cold war, it will require new sensitivity on the part of the Security Council if it is to understand the nature and the deep-rooted causes of African conflict. Only more direct knowledge of the realities in the countries affected and of the political, social, economic and humanitarian circumstances surrounding conflict, can result in such sensitivity.

In this context, we believe that the Security Council missions this year to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone were a step in the right direction. Furthermore, greater transparency in the work of the Security Council, closer contact with the General Assembly and the

establishment of a frank dialogue with the parties to conflict and with troop-contributing countries are also required. In this respect, the initiative to hold substantive meetings with troop-contributing countries, such as took place in October with regard to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, must be maintained and strengthened. In Africa, as in other parts of the world, the success of a peacekeeping operation will depend on the existence of political will, expressed in concrete terms through the contribution of adequate financial and human resources.

An examination of the relationship between the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the continuation of armed conflict is a further element in helping us to understand armed conflict. In that respect, the establishment of the independent panels of experts for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and for Sierra Leone will enable progress to be made.

Finally, the tribunals for Rwanda and for Sierra Leone will be an important deterrent and an indispensable component of a stable, lasting and just peace. We believe that there will be no true reconciliation and peace-building if those responsible for crimes that offend the common conscience of humanity go unpunished.

We live in a world of contradictions: integration and globalization coexist with fragmentation and marginalization. Reality shows us that the economic prosperity achieved in recent years coexists with the most extreme poverty in certain parts of Africa and elsewhere in the world. One fifth of humankind has to survive on just $1 per day. In spite of this, official development assistance (ODA) has been constantly declining. We believe that it must be increased. We also believe that the relationship between ODA and the implementation of policies is the key to ensuring sustained economic growth in Africa. Combating inflation and the fiscal deficit and encouraging savings and investment are measures that are directly related to the effectiveness of ODA.

Support should not be confined to ODA. It must also take the form of trade liberalization that will allow for greater international integration of African countries in the global market. Tariff barriers are taking new forms, such as the setting of work standards, environmental standards and anti-dumping measures, sending a discouraging signal to those African countries that are making considerable efforts to modernize their economies and acquire new export markets.

Today we wish to renew once again Argentina's commitment to Africa. From the beginning, our country has participated in and encouraged the decolonization process on the continent. Today we are promoting the state of law and the opening of the economy in the region. We have increased our trade and strengthened political relations. Consistent with the belief that peace and development are linked, Argentina has made contributions to peacekeeping operations in Africa, provided humanitarian assistance directly or through the "White Helmets" and promoted cooperation for development through cooperation funds. Furthermore, in the framework of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic, which connects three Latin American countries with 21 African countries, and which Argentina has been coordinating since 1998, we have proposed a series of initiatives aimed at deepening cooperation among its members.

We wish to conclude by reiterating the role played by African countries through the OAU and through subregional organizations in seeking solutions to their problems. The international community cannot, nor should it, remain indifferent to that effort. The United Nations, because of its universal character, and because of its broad mandate in the political, economic and social areas, has the capacity and the legitimacy to contribute effectively to peace and development in Africa. We believe that the special Working Group has carried out, and must continue to carry out, an important task of analysis, coordination and operational follow-up of the different initiatives for Africa existing within the United Nations system.

The meeting rose at 1.55 p.m.